EQUIPPING ADULT FAITH LEADERS TO FACILITATE AFRICAN
AMERICAN YOUTH TOWARD SELF-AWARENESS
IN A CULTURE OF ETHNOCENTRICITY


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# ABSTRACT

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The context is Mount Carmel Baptist Church in North Versailles, Pennsylvania. The

adult faith leaders are not equipped to facilitate African American youth toward self-

awareness. My hypothesis was an awareness training would allow leaders to help

African American youth embrace their identity in Christ to not only survive, but thrive in

a culture of racism and inequality. The methodology used was qualitative. In an eight-

hour workshop, attendees expressed their lack of knowledge concerning youth self-

esteem issues. At the conclusion, the response was that the training was beneficial, to the

leader's future training of the youth on vital self-esteem issues.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the African American community at large, whom has suffered and continue to suffer the indignities of racial inequality in the United States of America. I dedicate this project to the many men and women, black and white, who sacrificed their time, reputations, and often their lives to fight for the cause of justice for the minority populations, whom could not fight for themselves; and, to those who continue the fight "hoping to obtain a better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35).

# ABBREVIATIONS

CBN             Christian Broadcasting Network

MCBC            Mount Carmel Baptist Church

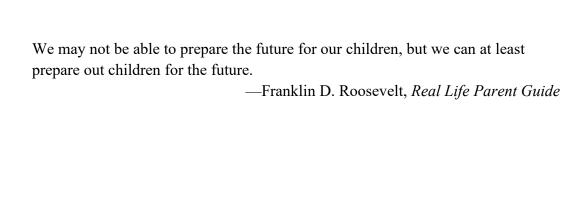NAACP           National Advancement for Colored People

N.O.I.          Nation of Islam

OIC             Occupational Industrial Center

PRRI            Public Religion Research Institute

Y.M.C.A.        Young Men's Christian Association

We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we can at least prepare out children for the future.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Real Life Parent Guide*

# INTRODUCTION

As a Christian educator, my question in teaching any age group is "what kind of person are you trying to develop?" I believe the answer is always "a person who is taught to love and embrace God early in life and hopefully design their future around that knowledge." The goal is to help African American youth in their formative years, to see themselves as valuable and necessary in a culture that does not value them. This can only be accomplished by reinforcing a deep and consistent nurturing relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Church is in a unique position, more than any other change agent, to address this problem. Where else, other than the Church, can the youth learn to see themselves as useful for God's purpose in their lives as well as in the community in which they live? Who else, other than the adult faith leaders who are charged with the spiritual formation of the youth, should be equipped to meet this challenge?

Due to the continuing ethnocentricity and racism in America, it is essential to equip and empower adult faith leaders to facilitate African American youth in their formative years toward self-awareness and self-esteem in Christ. African American youth must know that Jesus identifies with them in their struggles and cares for the oppressed. The purpose of this model is an awareness training for adult faith leaders that equips them to build within the youth, a foundation of faith in Jesus Christ that has self-

awareness as its primary focus. The Church historically, has not presented cultural self-awareness as an important Christian principle to embrace in order to thrive in America.

By exploring this historical deficit of the church and comparing it to our current culture of dysfunctionality in a youth culture that values sensationalism over substantive and moral values, the model identifies foundational areas that can be addressed to advance youth development in America's evolving racial climate. The Ministry Focus sheds light on the context and the problems that need to be addressed.  In chapter two, the biblical foundations explored Deuteronomy 6:4-7 as a clear mandate from God to the Jews to teach their children to love, serve, honor and obey God. Although my project is specific to African American youth, it was beneficial, in chapter three to use the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), as an historical reference to the concern for the spiritual well-being of men in general. Historically, black people have defined themselves according to what appeared to be appropriate in the existing American culture. The definitions went from "Negro" to "Colored" to "Black" to finally, "African American." This model seeks to equip and empower adult faith leaders to show youth, through scripture, that they are unique, and valued (not superior), and necessary for the upbuilding of God's Kingdom, and the community as a whole.

In chapter four, I look closely at the theological implications of the problem in the project. In chapter five, I used such scholars as James Cone, Renita J. Weems, Anthony C. Reddie, and others, the chapter reviews the moral and racial perspectives of the scholars. Chapter six provides the project in its entirety.

The methodology used was qualitative and involved interviews with three African American pastors in the surrounding areas of my context. The purpose was to get their

perspectives on the problem I see in my context. Did they encounter the same issues? Were their adult faith leaders equipped to assess the problems the youth encountered? Did they feel they understood the challenges African American youth face today? In addition to the interviews, a survey and questionnaire was provided to the adult faith leaders in my context, as well as pre and pos-test questions for the workshop participants.

The purpose of the study was to bring awareness to an existing, but often ignored problem that hinders African American youth in their efforts to be successful in life. In an eight-hour session, we were able to show that the Church has not used scripturally based criteria to address self-esteem issues in African American youth, thus hindering their understanding of their Christ-established value. The psychological and sociological portrayals of the African American culture is of great benefit in understanding why the unjust disparities continue. The spiritual component of this model encourages the Church toward an active and on-going process of spiritual empowerment for the youth through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and His support of the least empowered and vulnerable.

This model embraces the idea that African American youth, being facilitated toward the full embodiment of their awareness of self in Christ, can thrive beyond any human groups perspective of who they are supposed to be. This model also challenges adult faith leaders to revisit their current curriculum and adjust it to include the principles expressed in scripture that bring awareness to the youth's identity in Jesus Christ.

# CHAPTER ONE

## MINISTRY FOCUS

My context is Mount Carmel Baptist Church, located at 90 Port Perry Rd., North Versailles, Pennsylvania. The particular area in which the church is located is called Crestas Terrace, a uniquely sectioned out area from North Versailles proper. It is as if "Crestas" was deliberately designed to accommodate a specific type of community. Mount Carmel Baptist Church is the only African American and Baptist Church in North Versailles, Pennsylvania. The other denominations represented in North Versailles are: Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Methodist. These churches were formed between the mid-1700's to the early 1800's and are still comprised of primarily white congregations. In 1924 a group of African American Christians saw the need to organize a place of worship in their community of Crestas Terrace. The first pastor to be called was Reverend A.C. Malloy, who only served a short term, due to the distance he had to travel. The church then called Reverend Charles H. Smith as the first full time pastor. Under Reverend Smith's leadership three trustees, Quarterly Doyle, James Gray and Albert Revis were appointed. The certificate of incorporation was filed on September 27, 1924 and an application for the charter was made on October 16, 1924. Mount Carmel is a ministry that has functioned as a close knit, family organization, with no real affiliation with the other denominations until the late 1970's. The general

characteristic of the church in its literature and member's perspective is community oriented.

*Geography and Racial Make-up of North Versailles, Township*

According to the 2010 United States Census Bureau statistics, the land area in North Versailles Township in square miles is 8.02.  In 2010 the population per square mile was 1,271.  2017 estimates of the population are 10,229. The racial make-up is 87.81% White, African American, 9.77%, Hispanic, 0.49%.  There were 4,933 households, out of which 23.3% had children under the age of eighteen living with them, 44.7% were married couples living together, 13.9% had a female householder with no husband present, and 37.1% were non-families.  The median income for a household in the township was $30,617, and the median income for a family was $38,145.  Males had a median income of $31,389 versus $25,451 for females.  The per capita income for the township was $16,1991.  About 8.5% of families and 9.8% of the population were below the poverty line, including 17.4% of those under age eighteen and 8.5% of those sixty-five of age and over.[1]

The synergy chapter unfolds in the form of my view from the pulpit. View, not as a geographic location, a physical platform from which observations about people are made, rather the pulpit as an experience completely dedicated to all things God.  It is my heart, the workplace where I commune with God on behalf of the souls' He has entrusted to me.  It goes beyond preaching only, it is pastoral, the art of biblical shepherding.  In John 10:11-12, Jesus makes the distinction between the hireling and the good Shepherd

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[1] "Census of Population and Housing," United States Census Bureau, 2011-2012, accessed April 23, 2017, https://www.census.gov/geo/wwwgazetteer/gazette.html.

(Himself).  My reasons for writing this chapter are birthed out of twenty-nine years of pastoral experience, observations in various pastoral styles, conversations and interviews with other pastors on their perspective of what pastoring really means, and prayerful deliberation on Jesus' statements about the hireling and the Good Shepherd.  My view considers experiences I had as a new Christian with no church experience that directly affected (and still does affect), my perspective on pastoral nurturing.  These experiences go a long way in shaping my pastoral style.  I will only reference one of them to paint a clear picture of what I call my "view."

Upon joining my home church, I observed women, beautiful, well-coifed dressed in black with pear earrings and necklaces. They wore white gloves, had beautiful smiles as they greeted me and others coming into the sanctuary. Upon joining the church, that morning, one of these women, Jackie attached herself to me immediately. She explained that the women were ushers, and I asked if I could be one.  I was introduced to the president, an older woman who looked me up and down, which made me feel very uncomfortable.  My appearance certainly did not mirror their appearance, as I was adorned with my jersey print dress and huge afro.  "Get her information, and I will call her" the woman said curtly. In between that Sunday and three weeks later, I saw that there were male ushers and a young people's usher group.  When the rotation came back around to the women, I asked Jackie if she was sure that I could join.  Realizing that I had not been called, Jackie took me back to the president, who sharply asked me why I was in a hurry, and that she would call me.  I broke out into tears.  I felt as if I had done something wrong, and attempted to leave, but Jackie stopped me.  I will never forget her words "Please do not go.  Let me tell you what is happening.  The new pastor just merged

the senior and young women ushers as one, and the seniors do not like it.  Try not to let

her get to you, she really is not that mean, that is just her nature."

In my personal growth, I learned these valuable lessons with that first experience:

1. I had been discipled to a ministry, but not to Christ.  In time, I was discipled to the choir and the missionaries.

2. God saw fit to show me two very important principles in one experience: Nature versus Nurture, which is one of my most important leadership teachings.  The older woman gave me her "nature." The younger woman gave me her "nurture."  If I had been left with just the one example "nature," I would have left.

3. The pastor, to his credit, saw the fledgling senior ushers diminishing through age, death and downright mean spiritedness.  Rather than "put them out to pasture" he merged the two groups to bring balance to the ministry and still let the seniors feel their worth.  The problem was he chose to allow the older woman to be the leader over the unit in order to stroke her ego, which resulted in what he was trying to prevent… people leaving the women's usher ministry.

As I have experienced in pastoring, there must be a way to throw out the bath water but

save the baby.  The water is murky, it is polluted with tradition, minds that refuse to

change, the need to be important and hold to position.  Some leaders, as with the older

woman felt entitled because they have survived, even outlived two or three pastoral

administrations.  It does not bother them that the ministry has dried up and that no one is

really following them, but people like them.  They are in every sense of the experience

bad for progress, and yet, of value because they love God and are loved by God.

My view concerns discerning the spiritual condition of the people whom I pastor.

"As we consider the pastor's role as intercessor, another issue arises.  The

individual seeking to come closer to God may be burdened and blinded by a kind of guilt

and estrangement that requires great understanding on the part of the pastor.  This kind of

guilt and estrangement may result from the usual personal failures."[2]  One of the main

issues in my present context, is the need for a continuing Leadership Development

Program.  This would involve integrating leadership principles in youth and young adult

programs as well as in the Discipleship Institute.  Assigning people to leadership and then

training them is somewhat beneficial, however, to do foundation development creates a

better growth experience.  The perceived downside of this is a concern that developing

people on this level, gives them the opportunity to take what they have learned and use it

in another church where there is more growth and or financial opportunities.  I say

perceived, because a part of understanding leadership at its best, is developing people for

wherever God will use them.

From this point, my context is shaping me as I seek to develop and nurture the

people of God to His standard.  My ministry interests revolve around strengthening

people in the inner person, helping them to maintain healthy spiritual outlooks on life,

and teaching them to be intentional about guidance through God's word.  I see the need

for this due to the observation of an increasing pattern of a church related salvation as

opposed to a Christ related salvation.  My observations in my present context as well as

my previous context, has been people (to their credit), deeply loyal to all things "Church"

without possessing that level of loyalty to Christ.

This issue is reminiscent of ten years ago, when the new Archbishop of the

Roman Catholic Diocese in Pittsburgh, presented twenty new young priests to the

priesthood.  The media interviewed some of the young men. One of the questions asked

of them was "What does all this mean to you and how will you live out your new life?"

[2] Samuel D. Proctor and Gardner C. Taylor, *We Have This Ministry* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996), 34.

The answers were framed differently but carried the same overall theme: "I am excited about the opportunity to do service to the Pope and the Church." One after another, I waited to hear one of them express a desire to please Christ, to glorify God though their appointments, but it never came. As I reflect on my spiritual autobiography, I wonder if me not having a church or Christian foundation has made me more sensitive, or insensitive to the human condition when the absence of a personal relationship with Christ is evident.

Case in point, and one that many have argued with me because of my firm stand, which is on the exposure of the years of child sexual abuse within the priesthood. If the priests are being discipled to the Pope and the church only, and the legalism within that system forbids marriage, then what becomes of the normal, healthy need for intimacy which can be accommodated by marriage? Although the issue of sexual abuse is in no way common only to the Roman Catholic Church, it appears that theirs is to a larger degree. In my city (Pittsburgh) during the mid-1970's many of the old Catholic churches were abandoned, and ultimately torn down for new renovations. The bones of babies were reportedly found in the structure of some of the walls. The implication was that nuns aborted their babies and buried them or enclaved them.

My view becomes even more clear. Only the Holy Spirit can accommodate the weaknesses of the flesh, mind and body, but if that is not what a person is being urged to accept, and he or she is not nurtured to embrace Jesus in all of His fullness, then what can the end result be? In no way is this to justify the horrors of the scandal, but to draw attention to a biblical principle. The burden and the guilt Dr. Proctor speak of in his section of the book, *We Have This Ministry*, could be the inevitable and unfortunate result

of bad discipling.[3] My ministry interests and skills relate to the needs of my context,

which displays the distinction between a church related salvation only, and a personal

relationship with Jesus Christ, that promotes the proper understanding of service to God.

I am proof.  When I joined my home church, I functioned with a church related salvation

for six full years.  I had been discipled to the ushers, the choir, and the missionaries. I

followed the rules and was loyal to the church and the pastor, yet empty and void of a

spiritual awakening that forced its way into my life, by way confrontation with Jesus in a

life or death situation.  In a semi-comatose state, I bargained with God for the future of

my baby.  I actually understood in that dark place that this God in whom I believed, but

did not know, established a relationship with me in His assigned meeting place, my heart.

It is there that all things concerning God work for me; my love and concern for people,

my desire to help them see God in the most glorious of ways, is in my heart. I am

desperate for the people in my context to know God in their experiences of life.

There is a need for more intense discipling, even within my context; particularly,

with the youth.  The age of following the path of crime and addiction is becoming

younger and younger. It used to be around fifteen years of age, you could notice this

pattern of seeking gang relationships and all that goes with those relationships, but now it

is twelve years old, often as young as ten years old.  This is evident by the lack of desire

for the knowledge of God's word, as many in my context crave and respond to the high

praise and worship, distancing that from the actual word that is being preached.  At times,

it is as if people believe praise and worship are one part of the experience, totally separate

from the preached word.  There is a need to continue to help the people embrace the

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[3] Proctor and Taylor, *We Have This Ministry*, 34.

fullness of the worship experience, understanding that the preached word is the ultimate

elevation of the service.

My context, Mount Carmel Baptist Church is somewhat of a mystery to the

Pittsburgh area and the community of North Versailles Township.  It was viewed as a

mystery when the first church called me to be their pastor. There were plenty of female

preachers around, but no pastors with the exception of two, who started their ministries.

First Baptist was an eighty-five-year established Black Baptist Church, which boasted of

two moderators in its history.  To add to the mystery, the people sought me, a woman, out

to be their pastor.  I had no intention toward being a pastor and was quite satisfied being

the Minister of Christian Education at my home church, Ebenezer Baptist.  My view of a

"call" was forming.  I knew of preachers who applied for churches. Some were my

brothers in the ministry, who upon expressing the call, sought a vacant church where they

could serve out what God was doing in them. The pastorate was not on my radar.  For a

second well established Baptist Church to call a woman single (widowed), under the

same circumstances as the first, was unheard of in our area.

In my first context, the Lord raised up five men to the preaching ministry.

Breaking tradition with the ordination protocol in the Baptist faith, I ordained all five of

them.  I prayed about my decision and got perfect peace with God.  My concern was that

once I left the church, they might fall into the hands of a "pharaoh that knew not Joseph."

Before leaving, the oldest, Bob Mills was called to St. Paul Baptist Church in New

Castle, Pennsylvania.  He is currently in his twenty-sixth year.  Two went into prison

ministry, one into chaplaincy work, and one I recommended to Mount Carmel, where I

now pastor.  To my surprise, the official board of Mount Carmel asked me to consider

being their pastor. After prayerful deliberation and several conversations with my pastor,

I accepted the call and am currently serving in my eighteenth year. I reference this

history because I believe it explains my being able to do ministry in ways that are not

traditional; that being the first female called to two established black Baptist churches,

serves as some exceptional move of God.

I bring several gifts and skills to the pastorate that have been instrumental in the

positive growth of my context. My deep thirst for knowledge of God and God's church,

has kept me in a constant study mode. It is important that the people in my context are

informed and spiritually enlightened. The need for further study and teaching increases

as the context continues to grow. I love the people of God and celebrate the opportunity

to be used as an instrument of God's will on their behalf. Being a personal touch pastor

builds a close relationship that plays out in trust and service. Honesty and integrity are

important qualities that I believe allows God to broaden one's perspective on His behalf.

I have fourteen years of corporate management. I was responsible for thirty-six

people, twenty-four computer operators, two secretaries, a mail room and an art

department. We made the Yellow Pages for Bell Telephone. Leadership in the corporate

environment provided me with the opportunity to balance pressure and power. This

company did not want managers, they wanted leaders, people who could make other

people comfortable and willing to follow them to bring the desired results (profit). I was

the Minister of Christian Education at the same time I was with corporate in the secular

environment. This gave me a tremendous training in handling personalities in both

environments. Both required structure and organization, developing leaders, nurturing

people and encouraging them to be used to their highest capability.

In the workplace, budget management was an absolute necessity.  In the workplace, it was observable, tangible and easy to manage.  In the church, tithes and offerings are not so easy to determine and depend upon.  The variables are driven by income, loss of income, mind-set towards giving, the biblical understanding of a person's responsibility to the temple, etc.  Promoting a vision and inspiring people to catch it is necessary.  Creating a sense of pride within the context helps people to trust God for a positive outcome.  Nehemiah portrays a perfect example of this, when he encouraged a depressed people to rally around a common concern that united them, the building of a wall.  I have discovered this principle is a blessing in the church, when the people understand it.  When they know they are the direct cause of making something wonderful happen on behalf of the kingdom work, it inspires them.  The early pay off of Mount Carmel's mortgage is a result of this kind of inspiration.  Since I am excited about the kingdom, about Christ, and about building people spiritually, the people catch the excitement.  I know that I bring encouragement to the context.

The median age in my context is fifty years old. Many congregants in this age group have at least two years of college, some undergraduate degrees and seven have master's degrees.  This creates a need for ministry that permits them to use their skills as they are willing. Approximately 37% of the church are children ranging between the ages of one to twelve, teens comprise roughly 30 %.  One of the key groups that can easily be lost if not paid close enough attention to, are the "Millennials." This group ages nineteen to thirty-five years come with their own set of issues and questions. Often, they want to know if the church is relevant.  I began two years ago tapping into their concerns and shaping (with their help) ministry that makes sense to them. Their issues are careers,

relationships, sexuality, and politics. They wanted to know the church's role in social action issues, and topics such as police brutality. Their issues are addressed in topical Bible studies and people who are involved in the struggles they face yet maintaining their Christian perspective. However, there is a need for more forums and dialogue with them about their concerns. I also see the great value of doing inter-generational ministry between the Millennials and the Senior Citizens. Addressing the church shootings have opened a whole new avenue of conversation with the local police and invaluable training on security. Pastoring is an unfolding pot of issues, that create a needs meeting message, as well as techniques to address those needs. The children of incarcerated parents need programs to keep them connected to the parent who will be released one day. The church and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) must be addressed; how to encourage people to take part in a ministry that addresses their fears. Drugs and alcohol plague the community and the church.

Troubled marriages and abuse issues are very high on the list. My context needs a more in-depth marriage and counseling program. One would be tempted to believe that there cannot possibly be an answer to all of this, and within the frame of the local church, to a large degree there is not. That is why the push to nurture the inner person is so important. There is a need to help marriages be more spiritually balanced as they work through their concerns.

My intent is to keep pursuing the heart of God through His word, and by the power of His Holy Spirit. The need in my context is to enlighten people to the fact of the power of God to address all situations. It is not just sermonizing and lectures on topics, it

is an intentional determination on the part of the pastor, to show by example that yes, the power lives in us. It is a constant push to share my view of the pulpit as a life work that God wants us to take as seriously as He does. If Jesus cared enough for the souls of mankind to die for them, then we must understand that Jesus is entrusting us with those souls. This is a serious and important assignment, not to be taken lightly at all. I want to place focus on the accessibility and accountability that is on our shoulders. We have access to the souls of the weak, the vulnerable, the misunderstood, the endangered, the misrepresented. In some pastoral cases, that access has been abused and used for personal agenda. We are accountable for those things God has granted access. My context is a place where people are encouraged to seek God's will for their lives, with a strong emphasis on working out their salvation with fear and trembling with God's word as their guide.

One of the important needs in my context is to assist single parents in acquiring social services that are needed. This being addressed through our non-profit, A.N.O.P (An Ounce of Prevention). We do intervention for single moms who are being evicted and advocate for them in the courts. The name speaks to the purpose, which is to prevent problems before having to search for cures. One of the most effective ways this is being accomplished is with our "Second Chance" program. We have partnered with the local magistrate's office as well as several district judges to sentence teens who are first time non-violent offenders to community service at Mount Carmel. In this program, we do not have them clean the building or cut the grass. Our goal is to teach them skills for future career opportunities. They are assigned to work with sound and media as well as with computers. The most important aspect of this program is mentoring youth in life skills as

well as education.  The challenge (and it is a worthy challenge) is to help them see

themselves as valuable and indispensable; to God, their families and the community.

Since my context is the only black church in its community, the need to keep

building relationship with the other denominations and races is essential.  This also

involves helping the people in my context to understand the beauty of bonding with other

Christians and sharing the issues of our different cultures.  Mainly, to emphasize to those

in the North Versailles area who are of the Christian faith, that Christ is not divided.  I

can see a great opportunity for my context to build relationships by way of the food

distribution ministry which serves several hundred families, approximately 140 of them

in Crestas Terrace with thirty-three in my context.

**Conclusion**

I am a pastor, and all that I do and care about is to that end. My ministry project is

to:  to nurture the people God has placed in my care by intentional and provocative

teaching of His word; to make disciples, people who follow Jesus intentionally, and not

just do church; to train Christian leaders who will be of benefit to the Kingdom regardless

of what church or ministry they end up in, and to teach some (those identified as

spiritually mature and willing) the process and importance of spiritually nurturing the

youth. My specific concern is with spiritual formation of African American youth; young

males in particular; to develop curriculum that addresses the issues of the inner person.

The Bible is the ultimate curriculum, but often the application gets lost because of the

individuals lack of relationship with Christ; to, by God's grace, prevent as many young

people as possible from missing out on their God ordered purpose in life. Through patient

nurturing, love them through their issues. If there is a statement that could possibly be expressed from my heart, it would be to use the tools, skills, gifts, ideas, and vision to create an environment in my context where people can blossom to be their best for Christ.

The source of supply for all human needs is found in the word of God. The Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, expresses God's concern for people to have a personal relationship with Him, to identify with Him, and no other, as that source. The biblical chapter brings focus to this imperative.

# CHAPTER TWO

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

## Introduction

One of the most important responsibilities parents and spiritual leaders have to the children in their care is developing them to be productive human beings.  According to many studies on early child development, the first five years of a child's life are the most important.  These are the years that shape the child's growth, development, and learning achievement in school, home, and community.  Children learn more quickly early than at any other time in their lives, and the first five years are particularly important to the development of the child's brain.  Laying a firm foundation for learning and understanding is key in developing children, not just educationally, but spiritually as well.

It appears that children really learn better in environments that are "learning friendly" and have love and nurturing, balanced and regular meals, and caring teachers who make the child their primary focus.  Of course, this is not the reality in many cases, as some children do not always have the proper care that makes learning easier.  Not all parents are able to provide the necessary resources that enable the child to be at his or her best.  Even educational opportunities vary with economic disparities and geographic location, with race and ethnicity also being determining factors. The focus of this project is the church's responsibility to the children placed in its care for spiritual development.

How wonderful it would be if all African American children had the life experience that Dr. Samuel Proctor shared in his book, *The Substance of Things Hoped For* to have parents and grandparents so intently involved in every aspect of the child's life; to grow up knowing the child's Sunday School teachers who taught the Bible on Sundays were the same people who taught the child science and math Monday through Friday, who also had a personal relationship with the child's parents as well.[1] What a fighting chance so many of our youth (present company included) would have had.  However, the reality is that Dr. Proctor's experience in his era was not the norm, rather, the exception. When the author sees and studies the intensity with which some cultures (the Jewish faith specifically) develop their children spiritually, it is reminiscent of what Dr. Proctor and others were blessed to experience.

As a Christian educator, the author's question in teaching any age group is "what kind of person are you trying to develop?"  For children and youth, the answer is always "a person who is taught to love and embrace God early in life and hopefully design their future around that knowledge."  Our churches typically have literature that is age-appropriate, be it Sunday School or Vacation Bible School, as well as general Bible study programs, much of it serves its purpose for structure and instruction.  The Bible stories are often accompanied by colorful, appealing pictures that help the child visualize the lesson at hand and identify with the Bible characters.  The teacher's guides serve to give the instructor a direction in which to map out the lesson plan for the best recommended results.

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[1] Samuel D. Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 6-45.

The author's context (pastor of a predominantly African American congregation) gives her the day-to-day, up close and personal opportunity to see the deeper spiritual impact, or lack thereof, that the aforementioned process has on the youth.  It also gives the author the opportunity to assess the manner in which the information is passed from the instructor to the student. Is it being taught to simply follow the process and make sure the teaching criteria is met before moving to the next level? Or, is it being taught to help the child embrace a deeper personal relationship with Christ? Example: if the teacher is teaching the six things the Lord despises from Proverbs chapter six, what does "feet that run swiftly to mischief" actually look like to an eight- or twelve-year-old child?  How does the teacher place the child in the experience and then help the child see how it affects his or her witness and growth, and possibly, the church or group as a whole? In looking at various religions and cultures and their methods of developing their children to embrace their faith and the God they serve; the author has chosen to focus on the Jewish religion as an example. The author wants to explore Deuteronomy 6:4-7 and see how this teaching can be of significance to spiritually nurturing children in the twenty-first century Christian Church.  The purpose is to teach those who teach children in the author's context how to go beyond the curriculum, to bring not only an intellectual awareness to the child for knowledge, but to turn knowledge into a deeper spiritual awareness; "…that they be filled with the knowledge of God's will with all wisdom and spiritual understanding."[2]

The Bible gives clear instructions on shaping children (for God) for life, in both the Old and New Testaments.  For this reason, the author has chosen Deuteronomy 6:4-7:

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[2] Colossians 1:9, King James Version. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the KJV.

(4) Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; (5) and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (6) And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: (7) And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up.

Regarding verses six and seven, "These two verses are recited daily by faithful Jews, thus termed by some 'the Jewish Creed,' and are reckoned in the teaching of Jesus to be 'the first commandment' (Mark 12:29-30)."[3] In the author's interview with Rabbi Don Roshoff of Temple Emanuel in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania, he said:

I, and most in my congregation, are the direct outcome of Shema being enforced in our homes from birth and taught diligently in our temples. At sixty-two years of age, my children, who are married, still hold to this teaching in our home. My grandchildren expect this when they visit here. I cannot speak to what my children hold to in their homes, but they have been taught well.[4]

The author's interview with Rabbi Cheryl Henry of Rodef Shalom in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was very eye-opening. She was asked if she knew whether there were any studies to show how effective the constant teaching of Shema had on Jewish children. Here is her answer:

Not that I know of. What we do is a way of life to live, not so much studied for outcome. However, I will say this: not all of our children hold to the teaching all the time. They commit crimes as children in other cultures do. They turn from the teachings of their youth, as well. The major difference between our youth and possibly yours is money. Our instructors and family members are also our lawyers and business partners, financial advisors, etc. Unfortunately, we can buy our children out of any situation.[5]

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[3] Walter Brueggemann, "Deuteronomy," *Abingdon Old Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 83.

[4] Don Roshoff, interview by author, April 20, 2018.

[5] Cheryl Henry, interview by author, April 24, 2018.

These and other insights explored in this chapter encourage the author to make a major priority of nurturing youth for spiritual intimacy with Jesus.

This chapter will explore the literary structure of Deuteronomy, independent of commentaries with translation and or exegesis of the particular text. The chapter will include some historical information on ancient Israel. The second phase of the chapter will include work from commentaries, specifically, authorship and audience. The third phase of the paper will be the critical literary structure of Deuteronomy. The fourth phase will be a summary of the research.

First, the definition of Deuteronomy, according to Britannica.com, "is derived from the Greek, and means 'copy' or 'repetition' of the law, rather than a 'second law,' as the word's etymology suggests. This early edition, corresponding roughly to chapters five, twenty-six, and twenty-eight of Deuteronomy as it now stands, expresses a cultic liturgy" (cultic worship is social, more than a group worshipping the same deity in the same place at the same time).[6] The alternative title for Deuteronomy is the Hebrew Devarim ("Words"), written in the form of a farewell address by Moses to the Israelites before they entered the Promised Land of Canaan.

Shema Yisrael (or Sh'ma Yisrael; Hebrew "Hear O Israel") are the first two words of a section of the Torah (the title better known as the Shema), a prayer that serves as a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services. These are also the words recited to Jewish children in the morning and in the evening in the Orthodox, Traditional and Reformed Jewish families.

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[6] Encyclopaedia Britannica, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed. (Chicago, IL: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1992).

*Literary Analysis of Deuteronomy*

The literary features of Deuteronomy have been studied from a number of different vantage points.  After exploring the studies of other scholars, Meredith Kline (1963) proposed that the book of Deuteronomy had the same outline and structure as the international treaties known from the Hittite culture of the second millennium B.C.

Kline's analysis presents Deuteronomy as a treaty and argues that the relationship between a conquering king and a subject people was the paradigm used to define the relationship between God as suzerain lord (Sovereign) and His people, Israel. Kline gives the following outline for his position:

I.      Preamble (1:1-5)

II.     Historical Prologue (1:6-3:29)

III.    Stipulations (chaps. 4-26)

    A.  Basic (4:1-11:32)

    B.  Detailed (12:1-26:19)

IV.     Curses and Blessings, Ratification (chaps. 27-30)

V.      Succession and Arrangements (chaps. 31-34)

    A.  Invocation of Witnesses

    B.  Provision of Public Reading[7]

Kline further expands his outline of Deuteronomy in the following manner: (1) Deuteronomy as Polity, stating that it is a treaty-covenant document, having features of a law code. Kline compares this to a "constitution" of ancient Israel. (2) Deuteronomy as speech, to be understood as a series of three addresses by Moses to Israel on the plains of

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[7] Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Press, 1994), 97.

Moab. Robert Polzin in his book *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomy History* pioneered a literary approach to Deuteronomy that concentrates on speech analysis. (3) Deuteronomy as Exposition of the Decalogue; there are various points of view on the role of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy.[8] Stephen A. Kaufman states in his writing *The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law*, that Deuteronomy was structured to illumine the underlying moral principles set forth in the Ten Commandments.[9] (4) Deuteronomy as Music; Duane L. Christensen (*The Song of Power and the Power of Song* ) views Deuteronomy as a didactic poem composed to be read publicly to music in ancient Israel in a cultic setting.[10] Deuteronomy chapter thirty-two does contain "The Song of Moses," which Moses wanted taught to the nation (Deut. 31:19, 30).

*Israel in Deuteronomy*

The theological message in Deuteronomy seems to portray what an ideal Israel would be. It presents Israel with "one God, one people and one land, one sanctuary, and one law." In the covenant between God and Israel made at Sinai and renewed on the plains of Moab before Moses' death, Israel is portrayed as a unified, united people. Deuteronomy never exhorts the people to unity; it simply assumes it. Israel as unified is also reflected in Deuteronomy's practice of referring to the people as "brothers" (Hebrew

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[8] Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Study of Deuteronomic History Part Two 1 Samuel* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 7.

[9] Stephen A. Kaufman, *The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law: Study of the Northwest Languages and Literatures 1,2* (Santa Monica, CA: Western Academic Press, 1979), 105-158.

[10] Duane L. Christensen, *The Word Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 1-11.

*'ahim*; 16; 3:18, 20; 10:9; 15:3,7,9, 11; 17-20; 18:15, 18). The theme of oneness is clear

in Deuteronomy chapter five, where Moses' second address summons "all Israel."  In this

address, Moses issues a reminder to his audience that the Lord made a covenant at Horeb

(Sinai) "with us…Not with our fathers" (Deut. 5:3).  Israel, as an elect nation chosen by

God, is also a running theme in Deuteronomy (4:37; 7:6-7; 10:15; 14:2).  In addition to

choosing Israel, God also chose a king (17:15), the priests (18:5; 21:5), and the place

where He was to be worshipped (sixteen out of twenty times the verb "choose" is used in

chapters twelve through twenty-six.[11]

*God's Word in Deuteronomy*

"The word of God is authoritative and it is written.  As a covenant document, the

words of the 'book of the law' that Moses wrote governed, structured, and defined the

nation's relationship with her suzerain Lord and with one another.  The book reaffirms in

Israel the idea of 'canon,' a collection of written materials by which the life of the nation

would be administered."[12]

Originally, Israel heard the actual voice of God at Sinai, then God committed the

declaration of His word to human beings (to Moses 5:22-23, He reminds the people of

how they experienced tremors when God did speak) and then to the prophets who would

follow His model (18:14-22).  The true prophets would be distinguished from the false

prophets by their adherence to the covenant (13:1-5) and by the fulfillment of their

utterances (18:21-22). God's word in the mouth of Moses and the prophets would not fail

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[11] J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984), 30.

[12] Dillard and Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 103.

because God was the sovereign God of the universe. What He revealed would come to pass. In Deuteronomy 31:27-29, it was Moses who foresaw that Israel would not obey the covenant demands God issued but would turn away. "In this sense Deuteronomy itself becomes a prophecy for which the remainder of the Deuteronomistic History is the fulfillment."[13]

German scholar Martin Noth published his thesis that Deuteronomy through Kings constituted in the main a single history that was largely the product of a single author. His premise is that this exilic Deuteronomistic historian took over the Deuteronomic code in roughly the form we have now in Deuteronomy 4:44-30:20.[14] Martin Noth further contends that chapters one through three, even four, did not contain the introduction to the Book of Deuteronomy itself, but rather to the entirety of the Deuteronomistic history:

> During this period researchers also began to notice that the *literary structure* found in Ancient Near Eastern treaties between nations also resembled the structure of Deuteronomy. There is no clear consensus on most issues surrounding Deuteronomy. Issues on date and authorship are tightly bound up with questions of the relationship of the book to the remainder of the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua-Kings).[15]

*Translation and Exegesis*

The biblical foundation scripture is from Deuteronomy 6:4-7. The NIV reads:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them

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[13] Dillard and Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 93.

[14] Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1981), 16.

[15] Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1982), 405.

when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Yet, the ASV reads thus:

> Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up.

The imperative in the scripture is for Israel to both remember for themselves and teach their children to never forget that the Lord, their God, is one God. According to the *JPS Torah Commentary*, verses four through nine comprise the first paragraph of the instruction God gave Moses on Sinai and are, in a sense, the beginning of Deuteronomy proper. The author's understanding is that the most important thing for the Jews is that their loyalty and love to YHVH is to never be divided, and they are to be constant in remembering God's instructions so as to teach them to future generations. This further explains Solomon's instruction in Proverbs 22:6: "train up the child in the way he should go."

The New International Version (NIV) is "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it." In Matthew 19:14, Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The NIV reads, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." The Contemporary English Version (CEV): "But Jesus said, 'Let the Children come to me, and don't try to stop them! People who are like these children belong to God's kingdom.'" We are to move every hinderance, obstacle, or distraction that might prevent the child from seeing

Jesus as both Savior and Lord. Our teaching must be intentionally designed to make Jesus the center.

*Exegesis of the Specific Text (from the Hebrew Bible)*

"Hear, O Israel!" (verse four): listen, be focused on what is being said and take heed to it. These words call the people from distraction to attention. They are designed to tell the people that something significant and necessary is about to be said, for their ears only and not to be taken as general conversation.

"The Lord is Our God, the Lord alone" (the Hebrew Bible): Hebrew YHVH '*ehad*, literally, "YHVH our God YHVH one." The present translation indicates that the verse is a description of the proper relationship between YHVH and Israel. He alone is Israel's God. "This is not a declaration of monotheism, meaning there is only one God. That point was made in Deuteronomy 4:35 and 39 which state that 'YHVH alone is God.' The present verse by adding the word 'our,' focuses on the way Israel is to apply that truth: though other peoples worship various beings and things they consider divine, Israel is to recognize YHVH alone."[16] Supported by Zechariah 14:9, Deuteronomy 4:35 is describing a relationship with God, rather than God's nature. According to Zechariah what is now true of Israel will, in the future, be true of all humanity: "The Lord will be king over all the earth; on that day the Lord shall be one and His name one," (Zec. 14:9) meaning that for all humanity, YHVH and His name will stand alone, unrivaled. Deuteronomy and Zechariah both use "one" in the sense of "alone," exclusively. (Refer also to Isaiah 2:11,17: "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day"; and Zephaniah 3:9:

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[16] Jeffrey H. Tigah, "Deuteronomy," *The JPS Torah Commentary: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 76.

"For then will I turn to the peoples of a pure language, that they may call upon the name of Jehovah to serve Him with one consent)" (American Standard Version).

According to Walter Brueggemann, the pivotal covenant command of Deuteronomy 6:1-9 may be divided into two rhetorical elements: an introduction (verses one through three) and the actual imperative (verses four through nine). The introduction in verses one through three contains the characteristic rhetoric of Deuteronomy as imperative and consequence. Verse one connects the commandment with the statutes and ordinances to follow. It does this by the absence of a connecting conjunction before "statutes," so that "statutes and ordinances" stand in opposition to "the commandment." They are offered as an equivalent. The force of this grammar is to enhance the authority of what is to follow; namely, the obedience required in verse one has as its outcome in verse two, "so that" the children may learn to fear and obey. In other words, obedience is the way to teach obedience. The author views this as "teach what you live and live what you teach." As the substance of this address, Israel hears that YHWH is fully God of Israel.[17] YHWH, the one who has delivered from slavery, is the reference point that characterizes the life of Israel. The precise translation of the lead sentence is disputed.[18] The key phrase may be rendered as "YHWH is one," in order to stress the unity of YHWH who cannot be divided (the perspective also of Kline, as previously stated).

"You shall love" (verse five): the idea of commanding a feeling is not foreign to the Torah, which assumes that people can cultivate proper attitudes. Leviticus 19:17-18 commands, "You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart...you shall not bear a grudge

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[17] Brueggemann, "Deuteronomy."

[18] Dean S. McBride, "Polity of the Covenant People: The Book of Deuteronomy," *Union Seminary Review* 41, no. 3 (July 1, 1987): 229-244.

against your countrymen." It appears that the love of God (in Deuteronomy) is not only an emotional attachment to Him but is to be expressed in action. Deuteronomy is the first book in the Torah to speak of loving God. The other books speak mainly of reverence, Deuteronomy speaks of both love and reverence as attitudes to cultivate as motivation for Israel to obey God. Jesus repeated the theme of loving God all through His ministry. He repeated the first commandment to the rich, young ruler in Matthew 19:16, in response to his question "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" In Mark 12:28-30, a scribe asked Jesus, which is the first commandment of all? Jesus (verse twenty-nine) responds by reciting the Shema: "Hear O' Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: (v 30) And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment." In Luke 10:24, the ruler asked the question about inheriting eternal life. Jesus responded with the first commandment, but not the entire Shema. In all three passages a question is being asked of Jesus, and His answer is given using two Old Testament scriptures: Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. The Mark passage is the only one that has the full version of the Shema command, that is, the call to hear, the confession of God's oneness, and the command to love God. We teach our children the Ten Commandments and they can essentially recite them verbatim, but we must be intentional in teaching them that loving God with all one's heart, mind, soul, and strength actually causes the other nine to fall into place. If one loves God with all their being, they will not kill, steal, covet, etc.

"With all your heart and with all your soul:" in Hebrew, "heart" (*lev* or *levav*) usually refers to the interior of the body, conceived as the seat of thought, intention, and feeling; soul (refresh*)* refers to the seat of emotions, passion and desires. God's "heart

and soul" refers to His wishes and purposes (1 Sam. 2:35). To do something with all the heart and soul means to do it with the totality of one's thoughts, feelings, intentions, and desires.[19] The phrase is used to describe how Israel must love God and serve Him with undivided devotion. Love for God is not just an emotion; in this context, love can be commanded because to love God is to obey Him.

"With all your might:" this means "exceedingly." Hebrew *be-khol me'odekha* is comparable to the more common phrase *bi-me'od me'od*, "very, very much." Rabbi Henry offered the following Rabbinic exegesis:

> Prompted by the observation that this commandment requires action and not only emotion, gave these three phrases specific behavioral application. Since "heart" sometimes means "intentions," "with all your heart" was taken to mean "with all your inclinations," that is with the inclination to evil (*yetser hara'*) as well as the inclination to good *(yetser ha-tov)*, which are roughly equal to the id and the superego.[20]

Therefore, even the libidinal instincts are to be channeled to the service of God.

"Take to heart:" Moses here as a teacher. The father and teacher speak similarly in Proverbs, urging the son and disciple to internalize their teachings (Prov. 3:1; 4:4; 6:21; 7:3). This means "make this personal and important to you."

"These instructions with which I charge you this day:" this and similar phrases refer to the entire body of the Deuteronomic law and teaching. Essential to Deuteronomy's aim of disseminating knowledge of God's law is that parents teach these phrases to their children and speak of them constantly among themselves.

"Impress them:" teach them (Hebrew *ve-shinnantam*, literally, "repeat them"). Repetition is one of the most effective methods of teaching for desired results. Hebrew

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[19] Tigah, "Deuteronomy."

[20] Cheryl Henry, interview by author, April 23, 2018.

*sh-n-n* is probably an alternate form of *sh-n-h*, "repeat," "teach."[21]  It refers to oral

teaching, which remained the primary means of instruction in Israel even after the spread

of literacy.

"Recite them:" speak about them (*dabber be-*, as in 1 Sam. 19:3-4).  This is also

sensed in Psalms 119:13,46, where the psalmist describes his devotion to God's laws.

"When you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get

up," these pairs of contrasting phrases are merisms.  Accordingly, the verse means speak

of these words wherever you are, and at all times.  *Halakhic exegesis* (the entire body of

Jewish law and tradition comprising the laws of the Bible) used this and the next two

verses to shape the pattern of daily worship and observance.[22]

"Bind these words," not only must God's commandments be remembered and

spoken of constantly, but copies of them must also be worn on the body.  "On your

hand," the way that signs are placed on the hand.  "As a symbol," as a frontlet that is a

"headband."  The headband was the characteristic headdress worn in the Syro-Palestinian

area in biblical times (Deut. 6:8).

**The Principles of Deuteronomy 6:4-7 (Shema) in the New Testament**

Christianity's roots are in the Jewish faith.  Jesus drove this point home in His

Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:17: "Think not I am come to destroy the law, or the

prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."  "The Old Testament is the New

Testament concealed, the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed," is a jingle we

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[21] Tigah, "Deuteronomy."

[22] Tigah, "Deuteronomy."

teach our Sunday School students and people new to the study of the Bible to establish the relationship of the two books in their thinking. Passing faith from one generation to another is as crucial in Christianity as it is in Judaism. In addition to the previously referenced scriptures where Jesus recited the Shema, other New Testament writers affirmed Shema in doctrine development. A very clear example is Paul.

The fact that Paul was a Pharisee and well versed in the Jewish law played a significant part in many of his writings to the New Testament Church. As Jesus was the fulfilment of the law itself, so it seems that Paul was also assigned to bring the proper perspective of the law in Christianity to the Jews who would accept Christ. Paul received his revelatory commission from Jesus in Acts the ninth chapter, but the Torah was still as much the authoritative word of God as before. As we will see from following scriptural references, the significance of the Torah is now deepened under the Lordship of Jesus as he would recite, memorize, debate, and order his own life.

In Romans 3:29-31, Paul states the first part of the Shema that God is one, but distinguishing that God is not the God of the Jew only, but of the Gentile also. Paul now includes Jesus in this "oneness" in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6**:** "But there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (v 6). This can be likened to John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was nothing made that was made." Paul is not the only New Testament writer who used Shema as a basis for theology; James alludes to the "oneness" of God: "Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble" (James. 2:19).

"Theologian Francis Watson presents Paul as an exegete who reads Scripture in light of God's action in Christ and God's action in Christ in light of Scripture, and so definitively stresses 'the hermeneutical priority of the promise.'[23]

## Critical Literacy Analysis

Concerning its literary form, Deuteronomy presents itself as a set of orations or farewell speeches delivered by Moses on the plains of Moab shortly before his death. Tradition (Hebrew and Christian) holds that Moses is the author of Deuteronomy. Dating of the composition of the Book of Deuteronomy has been disputed by critical scholars who assert that Moses did not write the book. Instead, they attribute Deuteronomy to other writers who lived at a later date— either to Samuel in the eleventh century B.C. or religious leaders during the seventh century B.C., and possibly even to the postexilic period by the so-called "Deuteronomist." However, in addition to the evidence already presented for Mosaic authorship, support also comes from the similarities between the Structure of Deuteronomy and the Middle Eastern suzerainty treaties. Deuteronomy is given a language, style, and literacy form that conveys its Message with persuasion and power. God aided the inspired writers, as they chose the best literacy style and form for God's purpose. God aided in the use of the appropriate poetics to drive home His theological-historical messages.[24]

The word most descriptive of the book is found in Deuteronomy 5:1: Deuteronomy is Torah. Torah includes story, history, teaching, instruction, law, Yahweh's words. Torah is both theological and historical, both relational and legal, both prophecy and history. These elements are fused in Deuteronomy so closely that they are inseparable. The book must be read as one dynamic, living message. It is not primarily legal material, but *Haggadah* (story) with law embedded in it. God incarnates Himself in it among His people.[25]

The speech form also allowed the Deuteronomist to subvert his earlier sources without raising alarm. In their presentations, Moses's introductory speeches (Deut. 1-11) appear

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[23] Mohr Siebeck, *Paul and the Early Jewish Encounter with Deuteronomy* (Tubengin, Germany: Laupp and Gobel, 2010), 7.

[24] Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 23.

[25] Eugene E. Carpenter, "Deuteronomy," *Asbury Bible Commentary Part 2*, ed. Wayne McCowan (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 118.

to re-narrate past events as if to bring the audience up to the current point in the narrative, the encampment on the plains of Moab.

The literary device of having Moses re-narrate the past allows the Deuteronomist to re-tell "history," or rather, the historical narrative, in drastically different manners so that Moses now becomes the mouthpiece for the Deuteronomist's own views, beliefs, and ideology. See the following excerpt from Professor Bernard Levinson's book, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*:

> For the Deuteronomist retelling history then becomes a process of setting forth a new, contemporary and innovative reading of the past for religious and/or political agendas contemporaneous with the author, but indeed this is presented and packaged as not authoring a new story but retelling the authoritative tradition. Thus, innovation is clothed with the subversiveness of denying innovation, authorship, and originality.[26]

The canonical of Deuteronomy refers to the unique way in which the book has come in the form which we now have. The canonical concern indicates the book's placement and function in the Pentateuch and the following history of Israel law.[27]

*Paul and the Liturgical Deuteronomy*

Mohr Siebeck suggests that Paul probably encountered a *Septuagint* form of Deuteronomy in a Greek-speaking synagogue during his days of study in Jerusalem and may have committed it to memory there; the liturgical importance of certain sections of Deuteronomy is reflected in Paul's letters. In both Galatians 1:13-14 and Philippians 3:4-6, Paul appears to be a Pharisee marked by a zeal for his ancestral customs. In Ephesians

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[26] Bernard Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5.

[27] Carpenter, "Deuteronomy."

chapter six, Paul is teaching the church about proper family relations, discussing the parent-child relationship.  He instructs the child (v 4) to honor and obey his parents, then admonishes the parents to "not provoke their children to wrath."

*Author's Perspective*

Before this chapter, the author viewed Deuteronomy as purely historical, embracing the rich heritage of the Jewish people.  Due to the fact that the first group who were delivered out of Egypt perished, and Deuteronomy means "the same instruction given a second time," the author viewed the book as God's determination to impress His laws into the hearts of the people, for His glory and for their good.  The author still has that perspective, somewhat, and sees that as a running theme from the Old Testament to the New Testament.  In Luke 6:46, Jesus said, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say?"  However, the author is looking at the book more discriminately now for its poetic and liturgical value as well as the rich history.

**Summary**

Teaching faith as a foundation for life is not an easy task, but certainly a most important one.  Deuteronomy 6:4-7 is a clear mandate from God to the Jews to teach children to love, serve, honor, and obey Him. It would almost sound like a purely academic assignment were it not for the intrinsic benefits associated with the biblical truths:

The author wholly believes that God is real, and He really is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). This scripture declares that without faith it is

impossible to please God.  The author desires that our children be taught the reality of the

presence of God to the end that the reality will become a natural progression of who they

are.  The author further believes God is a Spirit (Jn. 4:24, and "they that worship Him

 must worship Him in Spirit and in truth."  All too many Christians appear to live a

church related experience only.  The author wants to show her leaders how to teach

children to see church as an encounter with God, a place set aside for special time

between Him and them; to help them be excited about getting to Him.  Of course, the

ideal would be for parents to partner with the church in making church a wonderful

spiritual adventure; for the child to go to bed Saturday evening on tip-toe anticipation to

see Jesus in the morning.  It is possible! The author has seen it; a child exclaiming in the

morning, "We're not going to be late going to Jesus' house, are we?"  Not just for "fun"

but because they need to know Jesus as their forever Friend.

The biblical foundation scripture the author has chosen, if understood properly

and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, can accomplish more than even the obvious

(training up the child).  It would challenge parents (who will receive) how to participate

in the spiritual formation of their children. It would also cause them to deal with their

own relationship with Jesus.  In the author's context, teaching teachers and leaders how

to invest in the spiritual formation of the children entrusted to their care will be of

tremendous benefit for the church as a whole.

There are several single parent families in the author's context; some of the

children are already in the danger zone.  As stated in the introduction, the target age for

some children in this environment is eight to twelve years, which is the beginning of gang

activity.  Most African American youth do not have the luxury of being "bought" out of

trouble. African Americans must operate on the premise that "An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure." The scriptures presented in this paper, Old and New, are biblical mandates from God to help children see Him as the Friend, Father, Confidant, Helper, and most importantly, Savior that He is. Adults must obey to teach the children to obey.

The children are exposed to many voices, some in their own homes. If the church has an opportunity to nurture them while it has them, it must with all due diligence show them their value in Christ Jesus. The author wants them to be taught the great love God has for them, and the great blessings that come with loving Him, just because of who He is. The author's intention, prayer, and hope is that when they grow older, facing the challenges that come with growth in a culture and country that does not really embrace them, they will know who they are and whose they are, despite the odds.

The Bible is the authentic source to build a child's foundation of faith. Even so, it is needful to examine how that foundation has been raised from the pages of the Holy scriptures and carried on in the spiritual nurturing of youth and adults over the centuries, as is presented in the historical chapter of this document.

# CHAPTER THREE

# HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter focuses on the spiritual development of youth in a pivotal period in the historical development of the church and the community. While specific spiritual development of youth has not been the private concern of the church, the church's interest in their development was grounded in a Christian lens, a lens not shared by secular non-profit organizations. The YMCA has been a valuable and notable exception its spiritual mission and objectives. Often, these views are not shared by other pro-youth organizations due to their non-evangelical nature. This chapter explores the essential, added value of youth development from a Christian perspective. It also provides answers to the deficit of the Christian church of this era, a deficit resulting in other entities stepping in to fill gaps left behind by the inadequacies of the church's foci.

By exploring this historical deficit of the church and comparing it to our current culture of dysfunctionality in a youth culture that values sensationalism over substantive and moral values, foundational areas will be identified that can be addressed to advance youth development. A historical analysis of the past and present issues affecting the spiritual development of youth will also provide a more comprehensive perspective for the purpose of Christian Education. This, at a time when the relevancy of church is being severely tested by statistical analysis and surveys dealing with youth attendance,

participation and communal involvement.  A question answered will be the mutual value

in co-partnership and cooperative objectives of the church and the YMCA.

The concern for the spiritual development of young men has been in the hearts

and on the minds of Christian organizations for centuries.  Some of it came as a result of

what many Christians viewed as the "institutionalization of the Christian Church."  This

is an observation that birthed a mindset among some Christians based on their view of the

decline within the Christian community.  Becoming impatient and disappointed with the

worldliness in the church, fourth century laymen chose to live a monastic life.  In fact,

Monasticism was the major reforming agency in the Middle Ages.  The Protestant

Reformation invigorated aspects of the gospel that had been obscured through the

centuries.  Then, there were the wave of revivals beginning in the 1730s that swept over

the American continent, at least once each generation.

> One of the permanent results of this evangelical spirit, designed to create an
> endless effect in the lives of young men, was the development of social
> organizations, such as the Young Men's Christian Association, more formally
> known as the YMCA. This social organization showed a deep concern for the
> young men who appeared to be adrift in the cities.  John Raleigh Mott was an
> evangelist and a long serving leader of the Young Men's Christian Association
> (henceforth referred to as YMCA).  According to Mott in his book, *Confronting
> Young Men with The Living Christ*, "confronting boys and men with the living
> Christ has been the enduring fruit of the YMCA.[1]

Of particular concern as a pastor of an African American congregation with

approximately 37% single parent households, some having youth between ages birth to

sixteen years of age, is the church must be intentional in focusing on the spiritual

development of youth.  While it is true that many African American households

historically, have given their children a solid spiritual foundation, including church

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[1] John R. Mott, *Confronting Young Men with the Living Christ* (New York, NY: George H. Dorian, 1937), 64.

attendance and participation, the present culture cannot boast of this as a norm.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2010, more than 24.7 million children (33%) live

absent their biological father.  57.7 of Black children, 31.2% of Hispanic children, and

20% of white children are living absent their biological fathers.[2]  This report also found

that a majority of 73.7 million American children age eighteen and under live in families

with two parents (69 %) a decrease from 88% in 1960.  Of those 57 million children

living in families with two parents forty-seven point seven million live with two married

parents and three million live with two unmarried parents.

However, broken down by race the statistics show stark differences.  The

percentage of white children under eighteen who live with both parents almost doubles

that of black children.  According to the report, more than one-third of all black children

live with unmarried mothers (compared to 6.5% of white children.)  The figures reflect a

general trend.  During the 1960-2006 period, the percentage of children living only with

their mother nearly tripled from eight to twenty-three percent and the percentage of

children living only with their father increased from one to four percent.  Social scientists

state the benefits for children living in two-parent homes are: economic, educational, and

health to name a few.  The following is information from Jawanza Kunjufu's studies on

"fatherlessness" in black homes, and represents the percentage of black fathers present

during specific time periods:

- 1920 – 90 percent

- 1960 – 80 percent

- 2006 – 32 percent

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[2] U.S. Census Bureau, "Family Structure and Children's Living Arrangements 2012," Current Population Report, July 1, 2012.

According to Kunjufu's findings:

- 63% of youth that commit suicide are from fatherless homes.

- 90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes.

- 85% of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders are from fatherless homes.

- 80% of rapists motivated by anger are from fatherless homes.

- 71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes.

- 75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse facilities come from fatherless homes.

- 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes

- 85% of all youth sitting in prisons grew up in fatherless homes.

- 82% of teenage girls who get pregnant come from fatherless homes.[3]

This information shows a compelling need for the church to do more in spiritually nurturing African American youth. One question is: "What happened to cause such a severe decline between 1960 and 2006? The author noted that in most discussions, there is always those who believe it is the residue of slavery in America.

While this may be true, the carryover of racist politics negatively effects almost every area of black life in America, there are other glaring issues that need to be discussed. Fourteen percent of all African American males are disenfranchised, and some of them depending on the state they live in have been permanently disenfranchised. Fourteen percent of African American males are not permitted to vote due to their involvement in the penal system. This problem is being addressed more openly now due

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[3] Jawanza Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries* (Chicago, IL: African American Images, 2006), 41.

to the recent 2018 mid-term elections in the United States.  The increasing amount of incarceration of black males, with a rising number of black females included contributes to the dysfunction of black children of this group.

According to Kunjufu, African American boys comprise eight percent of public school children, but they constitute thirty-three percent of the students placed in special education or suspension.  Kunjufu asks this question: "Is there a relationship between special education and prison? Between illiteracy and incarceration? Between Ritalin and crack cocaine?" More than sixty percent of black males are in prison because of crack cocaine (distribution of the drug, or crimes committed to accommodate the addiction.) "In less than thirty years the U.S. Penal population exploded from 300,000 to more than 2 million, with drug convictions accounting for the majority of the increase."[4]  The United States now has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, dwarfing the rates of nearly every developed country, even surpassing those in highly repressive regimes like Russia, China, and Iran.  In Germany, ninety-three people are in prison for every 100,000 adults and children.  In the United States, the rate is roughly eight times that, or 750 per 100,000.[5]

Drug related crime affects every family and culture in the United States, but "the racial dimension of mass incarceration is its most striking feature.  No other country in the world imprisons so many of its racial or ethnic minorities.  The United States

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[4] Marc Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2006), 33.

[5] PEW Center on the States, *One in 100: Behind the Bars in America 2008* (Washington, DC: PEW Charitable Trusts, 2008), 5.

imprisons a larger percentage of its black population than South Africa did at the height

of Apartheid."[6]

With this startling information, the effect on children of incarcerated parents must

be staggering as well. What should the Christian church do to help prevent children from

falling into the cracks, and following the cycle of their parents? Dr. Wilson Goode, a

former mayor of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1984-1992) founded the Amachi Program

in response to his own experience as a child of an incarcerated parent. The program

based in several northern cities, engaged churches to "adopt" children whose parents are

incarcerated for the purpose of sharing Christ for spiritual development. The members of

the churches serve as "big brothers and sisters" in the life of the child, with the ultimate

goal of reconnecting the child with their parent (s) while working toward reducing

recidivism in the released parent. The drug culture in the U.S. is a major cause of the

decline of the family between 1960 and 2006. Even if the family is not affected by

incarcerated family leadership, the addiction itself, contributes to the lowering of values,

inability to provide needed resources, and establish a strong foundation for the children.

Then, of course there are the general issues that contribute to the break-up of the family,

divorce, abuse, and economic issues.

There are many contributing factors to the decline of the church's impact on

youth and their diminished interest in church participation. As the culture has changed, it

has affected the way the church (in some cases) makes its appeal to youth. Music and

entertainment are a medium that really appeals to the young. The church has understood

this and been intentional (in many cases) about drawing and or keeping youth

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[6] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindedness* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2010), 6.

participatory by adding the musical culture into the worship experience.  To qualify, not

the terminology in the songs, but the beat and melody.  This is not all bad, considering

the culture change in worship music through the years.  There is also an increase in

"gospel sounds" and a slow decrease of hymns and anthems. In some cases, the message

gets lost in the beat, thereby providing another opening for the gospel message to be

diminished.  Many churches have opted for a more secular form of worship for the

purpose of engaging youth.   In the Baptist church, the Baptist Training Union (B.T.U.)

was a program that focused on spiritually nurturing young people.


*The Community Church, The Cultural Shift, The Change in the Church's Foci*

That which had been defined as a community church is a church that once served

as the base for all things in the black experience.  The worship, the public meetings, the

political statements, the promotion of activities, spiritual and social.  In his book *The*

*Substance of Things Hoped For*, Dr. Samuel Proctor addresses this truth.  These were

times when the black community and the Black Church practically functioned as one.  In

some small community churches, this is still the case.  However, as the culture began to

make demands on the local church that diminished the church's values, demands such as

renting worship centers to unchurched families for funerals so that term "community

Church" also diminished.  No longer can a person who never joined or attended the local

church, have access to the church for wedding or birthday and retirement events without

paying a fee, simply because they live in the community.  In some cases, burial cannot

take place in the church without a fee if the deceased was not a member.  While funerals

provide a great opportunity to witness Christ to the broken-hearted and the unsaved, the lack of financial support from the un-churched becomes an issue.

Another dynamic is inner city or large city urban churches lean toward seminary trained pastors to lead them, who often come with vision for the church that speaks to the changing culture.  In some cases (not all), the emphasis seems to be on expanding ministries, making an impact in the community via outreach programs.  While none of these things can be considered negative, the emphasis on spiritually nurturing youth in the inner person is still not evident.

Another reason for the decline is the excitement factor, where more emphasis began to be placed on activity than on spirituality.  Then, there is the non-parental guidance due to several factors, such as work schedules that prevented Sunday family worship.  In some cases, the children may have been sent.  It is also believed that there is a lack of interest in a balanced spiritual life among many baby boomers.  In this current generation in the black family is the busyness of the child, as Sunday sports competitions take the entire family away from the worship hour.

 What has contributed to the church's seemingly change in focus from making disciples, to making church members?  Without any attempt whatsoever to diminish the effectiveness of the church's presence in the community, personal observations are these: The 1960's in America experienced events that would forever change the culture of the church, and in many ways the perspective of people about "church."  The sixties were dominated by the Viet Nam War, Civil Rights protests, the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Although there has always been those who spoke against the injustices of America on blacks and minorities, the Civil Rights

Movement was probably the boldest movement since the Civil War. The reason being that the "Movement" was not so much about powerful white Americans speaking on behalf of the injustice to blacks and minorities as was the oppressed boldly facing and accusing the oppressor to his face. It was an organized, intelligent project designed to make change in the right place – legislation.

Therefore, the church again became the place to strategize and organize, addressing the important social ills, but not always balancing this with the spiritual nurturing so essential to success of all life issues. Another factor is the increased movement of the Nation of Islam. Known as the NOI, this African American organization is a political and religious movement founded by Wallace D. Fard Muhammad in Detroit, Michigan on July 4, 1930. The organization was enacted in response to the racism and economic disparities in the United States. The NOI is not a Christian organization, neither is it recognized as a legitimate Muslim faith by the worldwide Muslim community. Yet, many young men have left the Christian Church in response to the strong outreach program of the NOI. One of the NOIs most effective outreach programs is in the prison system because so many men entered the system from the street; they are accessible to the NOI members who are also incarcerated. These and other contributing factors show how non-church entities stepped in to fill the void that the church may have missed.

*History of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)*

The first YMCA was founded in 1844 in London. Its founder was George Williams, a clerk in a large dry-goods establishment. Williams and his friend and

roommate J. Christopher Smith were concerned about the demoralizing working and

living conditions of the young men employed at the company. Williams and Smith

feared that in the sordid environment where they worked, men's morals and spiritual life

would suffer. The group first met in the men's private living quarters. Eventually this

informal group received financial support and a meeting place from the company that

employed them. Early YMCA meetings were mostly prayer groups and Bible studies

whose focus was to win converts to Christ and encourage young men to live moral lives.

According to John Donald Gustave-Wrathall (*Take the Young Stranger by The Hand*) the

London YMCA was founded during a period of urbanization and industrialization in

North America. The start of the YMCA in America will be addressed later in the chapter.

According to Gustave-Wrathall, fear that the growing numbers of unattached,

unchurched young men in American cities posed a threat to society, caused the spread of

YMCA to North America in 1851. Being impressed by the British achievements, two

separate initiatives, Boston and Montreal were established.

> The evangelistic spirit of the Boston Association led its members to actively
> promote the Y.M.C.A. in other cities, leading to the rapid establishment of
> associations all over North America in the 1850s. In 1854, United States and
> Canadian associations formed a confederate for mutual support, the sharing of
> information, and to assist new associations in their growth and development. In
> 1855, largely through the organizational energies of North American Y.M.C.A.
> leaders, a World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations convened in
> Paris. North American Y/M.C.A. continued to spread and grow until the outbreak
> of the U.S. Civil War in 1861.[7]

The YMCA continued to have wide-spread growth until the outbreak of the Civil War in

1861. Due to the war, the United States cut the YMCAs in the south from those in the

northern and Canadian associations. As the young men were sent off to war, the

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[7] John David Gustave-Wathral, *Take the Young Stranger by the Hand* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 10.

membership of all U. S. and Confederate States associations were depleted. During this time, many of the associations disbanded or simply disappeared. However, some northern associations re-energized through their participation in the YMCA Christian Association. It was after the war that the Northern Confederation of YMCA underwent a dramatic reorganization.

An international committee was created to oversee the growth and development of new associations, and to coordinate the relations between the existing Northern American associations. This international committee was permanently established in New York City. "In 1868 Robert Weidenstall (1836-1922), one of YMCA's great bachelor secretaries and Richard Carey Morse (1841-1946), who remained single until age forty-two were hired as the first full-time employees of the international committee."[8]

As the role of the international committee expanded, their numbers grew. In 1868 and 1869, the Associations of YMCA's of the United States and British Provinces established policies that became binding on local associations for representation at the Northern American Conventions. "Women were barred from membership. Young men who were not members of evangelical churches were not allowed voting privileges. The term "evangelical" was defined, though it was left to local associations to figure out what churches fit the definition."[9]

YMCA membership before and after the Civil War was largely recruited from the ranks of the urban, white middle classes, mostly upwardly mobile clerks, bankers, lawyers, doctors, and merchants. YMCA's rhetoric upheld an ideal of brotherhood in

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[8] Gustave-Walthral, *Take the Young Stranger by the Hand*, 12.

[9] Gustave-Walthral, *Take the Young Stranger by the Hand*, 12.

Christ which was supposed to transcend class, race, or geography.  However, brotherhood with African Americans was weakened by northern white men's desire to avoid political controversy before the Civil War and to heal the breach with white southerners after the war.  The YMCA's version of interracial brotherhood was segregated "Colored," "Chinese," and "Indian" associations, which were generally underfunded and understaffed.  They were the last to acquire buildings and were generally the least developed associations in Northern America.

> The YMCA did outreach to working-class men in the nineteenth century primarily through railroad work," the brainchild of Robert Weidenstall.  After the turn of the century the YMCA developed "industrial work" as well.  Though middle-class YMCA leaders often had a genuine concern for the welfare of the working-class young men, the railroad and industrial branches were both well known for their procapital bias.  Their programming generally consisted of organizing Bible Studies, lectures, and prayer groups and providing workers with minimal conveniences.  YMCA's sought to make workers good and pious, not to help them win a better piece of the industrial pie.[10]

It is clear that the same bias's that are in the culture today, crept into the YMCA as the organization sought to keep its focus on spiritual nurturing of young men.  The initial concerns that caused George Williams and J. Christopher Smith to start the association in London, 1844 were all spiritual.  Those men were concerned that the existing culture would grossly affect the morality of young men and determined to strategize on the principle of "an ounce of prevention;" to catch them before the culture could do irreparable damage to their spiritual life.  Although there was much success due to their efforts, the very thing they fought so hard against, is the very thing that began to cast a shadow over their effort, classism, racism and ethnocentricity.  The spirit of these "ism's" that permeate America continue to influence the community.

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[10] Gustave-Walthral, *Take the Young Stranger by the Hand*, 14.

*YMCA and the Negro Community*

According to George R. Arthur, *Life on the Negro Frontier* the rural South for Negroes, (Terms such as "Colored" and "Negro" are being used in this section due to the timing of the historical record as it was written) was a woman's world, and the urban north, and latterly the urban south was for the Negroes, a man's world. When the first YMCA was being established in America (1850), Harriet Beecher Stowe was just completing her manuscript of *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

"The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 had been on the statute books for one year, and the exultation of southern slave holders at this national affirmation of the legal status of their "peculiar institution" was matched by the degree of despair on the part of northern Negroes, many of whom took immediate steps to leave the country and settle in Canada."[11] Noteworthy is that the YMCA had its setting in England (and America) during the period dominated by the personality of the queen (Victoria) who gave her name to the age and culture. In considering the institutional workings of the Young Men's Christian Association among Negros, this fact of social and occupational selection is of major significance. The slow growth of YMCA among Negroes reflects the cultural lag of the Negro community in developing the economic classes upon which the institution traditionally rested. In other words, the growth of YMCA among Negros mirrors to an extent the increasing stratification (social classification) the Negro community.

The work of the YMCA among colored men began in Washington, DC, two years after the first association was established in Boston. The first president, a colored man

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[11] Gustave-Walthral, *Take the Young Stranger by the Hand*, 28.

named Anthony Bowen, may have been inspired in his work by his acquaintance with his friend, a white man named William Chauncey Langdon. Bowen and Langdon worked together in the Patent Office, where Langdon served as secretary of the YMCA movement in Washington. The actual work of organizing the association was done by Bowen and other prominent Negros in Washington. It is significant that the second association established in 1866, was in Charleston, South Carolina, which before the Civil War was the center of a large free Negro population which had for decades maintained a community numbering many prosperous individuals and a high level of family stability. In this respect, Charleston was similar to Washington. One year later (1867) a third association began its work in New York City. The first student association among colored men was organized in 1869 at Howard University for the purpose of forwarding Christian Fellowship.

Soon after, student associations were organized at Fisk and Walden Universities in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1876, during the International Convention of the YMCA in Toronto, Dr. Stuart Robinson of Louisville, Kentucky made a plea for larger service among colored men. Sir George Williams of London, England, the founder of the YMCA, responded to the appeal with a contribution of one hundred dollars. In 1877, it was reported at the Louisville Convention, General George D. Johnston of Tuscaloosa, Alabama was secured by the International Committee to promote the work of the YMCA in the south. General Johnston along with other southern white men founded Stillman Institute in Tuscaloosa, a secondary and theological school for Negros supported by the southern branch of the Presbyterian Church. General Johnston met with leaders of both races, studied the needs of colored boys and men and promoted work for them. The

following is a quote from one of General Johnston's addresses expressing his concern

about the opposition to any kind of work of social uplift for Negros. "It is hypocritical to

be praying for the Chinese, Indians, or even the Negros in Africa, and appealing for funds

to send missionaries to them while we turn our backs on the godly men at home who are

teaching Christianity and call them 'nigger teachers.' Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will

guide us and give us the discretion to act right."

The following statement from George Arthur concerning Negro leadership speaks

volumes to one of the reasons spiritual formation in African American youth is so

essential:

> The first stage of the development of an institution among groups other than those
> among whom it is originated must depend upon outside leadership for its success.
> The progress of the movement -its rate of absorption into the culture of the group
> to which it is brought from the outside may be measured by the degree to which
> "native" leadership succeeds "foreign" direction. When the innovation
> accumulates enough strength to develop its own leadership, it may be said to have
> shown signs of reaching maturity, of accession to the second stage of institutional
> development.[12]

This school of thought, to me, gives the impression that people in general do not have the

mental capacity to formulate plans to help their group, culture, race excel without the

initiation of another group. In this case, the reference is to leadership among Negros. It

is true in some cases; the ability for minority groups to excel is hampered, but it is

generally due to lack of access and opportunity. In spiritually nurturing the inner person

among our African American youth, they are given the biblical and spiritual tools to see

themselves as fearfully and wonderfully made creations, with the ability and spiritual

power to accomplish all things through Christ.

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[12] George R. Arthur, *Life on the Negro Frontier* (New York, NY: Association Press, 1934), 22.

*Negro Leadership in the YMCA*

Much of the early separation existing between the YMCA Movement among whites and Negros, was due to the fact that equal social and economic classes did not exist in the two races. The early history of racial contact in this country found the one race looking down from its own social pyramid to the other race, which had few divisions into social classes, and which was perforce composed of an undifferentiated mass of laborers. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Negro group was developing differentiations in its own structure similar to those found among white persons. The two races began to look across to each other, finding within each group the same comparable cleavages into classes and different levels of economic and social ability.

> This transition was witnessed in the development of the YMCA among Negros, first with an "alien" leadership which was obliged, for want of the class among Negros corresponding to that which furnished the backbone for the movement among white persons, to confine its work to inspirational work among students and in colleges. The first signs of development along the lines suggested that among Negros were followed by the rise of a Negro leadership to take the place of those noble white men who had brought the movement to Negros. By 1888 the YMCA had reached this point among Negros, and the need for leaders drawn from the race was increasingly apparent. They were needed both for organizers of local associations and in fields already occupied.[13]

In 1888 William A. Hunton, a colored man from Ottowa, Canada, was secured to promote the work in Norfolk, Virginia. Hunton became the first paid colored executive of the YMCA.

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[13] Arthur, *Life on the Negro Frontier,* 28.

*Formal Youth Ministry Education in the YMCA*

Formal youth ministry education came in two waves. Both were tied to professionalization of youth ministry. In the nineteenth century, the YMCA recognized a need for well trained professional workers as the movement spread throughout the world. Following World War II, as the Young Life and Youth for Christ Movement expanded, it then inspired similar church-based youth ministries. A second wave of youth ministry education took place connected with Christian colleges and seminaries. The need for General Secretaries to lead YMCA organizations in major cities gave rise to formal educational structures. Unlike the other youth ministry movements of the period, YMCA relied on paid staff members and required buildings in which to house their work.

By the 1880s, the General Secretary positions in the YMCA had become decidedly professional and a call went out to provide academic training similar to law and medical schools. Two schools developed over the next forty years; Western Secretarial Institute based in Chicago, Illinois later renamed George Williams College and the School for Christian Workers, later renamed Springfield College in Massachusetts. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the YMCA in America began dividing into two camps with the liberal Social Gospel of Walter Rauschenbusch leading the way to a "vigorous, robust, muscular Christianity." "This group relied heavily on the rapidly developing social science disciplines to shape their approach to training YMCA workers. They embraced modern science, evolution, and the new science Biblical criticism. The authority of their work shifted from the Bible to disciplines of modern science."[14]

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[14] Eliza Stiles and Sharon Galgay Ketchum, "After Modesty Culture: Living in the Hope of Our Redeemed Bodies," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2014).

Conservatives in the movement retained convictions that the Bible and Christian doctrine should be at the core of the YMCA ministry. These leaders identified with D.L. Moody and Robert McBurney, both of whom died in 1899.

*A Timeline of the Young Men's Christian Association's Beginning and Growth*

This timeline shows North America and America's record of the YMCA:

The Beginning occurred in 1851.

1852 New Associations - New York, Washington, DC, Detroit, Springfield, Massachusetts

1856: Student Associations organize at Universities in Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

1857: YMCA hires its first full time employee, John Wanamaker.

1858: The Charleston YMCA starts the first woman's "Y."

1860: 205 YMCAs have been established with the emphasis on Bible Study, reading and counseling.

1867: E.V.C. Eato of New York becomes the first Black delegate to attend the Annual Convention.

1869: The first YMCA buildings constructed with gymnasiums are opened in Washington, San Francisco and New York City.

1872: The first Railroad YMCA.

1878: The Detroit YMCA offers night classes in Latin, and New Testament.

1879: First YMCA serving Native Americans founded in Dakota Territory.

1879: Dwight L. Moody formally opens the Northfield Seminary for Young Women.

1882: YMCA begins work with miners and lumbermen.

1884: First YMCA training Institute is established in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.

1885: J. Gardner Smith of the Bowery Branch YMCA in New York City starts a leader's corps of young people in the physical education department.

1886: Ellen Brown is the first full time secretary in America, in Buffalo.

1888: William Hunton becomes the first African-American General Secretary of a local branch in Norfolk, VA.

1889: Hi-Y, a high school boys service club starts in Chapman, Kansas.

1891: The national YMCA creates a "Colored men's department" and hires William Hunton as national secretary.

1892: The first ever YMCA Handbook is published.

1894: England's Queen Victoria knights' founder, George Williams at the fiftieth Anniversary of the YMCAs founding.

1895: The first YMCA American staff is sent to China.

1897: Law courses are first taught at the Boston YMCA.

1898: The YMCA establishes the Army and Navy department during the Spanish-American War.

1899: The first and only prison YMCA is founded at Illinois State Reformatory.

1907: The YMCA movement establishes Association Press to share information and expertise.

1910: National boy's week secretary, Edgar Robinson, works with two Englishmen who founded the Boy Scouts of America.

1911: Julius Rosenwald, President of Sears, Roebuck and Co., in Chicago, makes a $25,000 contribution to erect the Wabash Avenue YMCA.

1912: Canadian National Council of YMCAs forms an organization separate from the U.S. movement, ending fifty-eight years of joint cooperation.

1915: John Mott becomes second National Secretary.

1918: Irving Berlin writes: "I can always find a little sunshine at the YMCA."

1933: Jerusalem YMCA building dedicated to serving Jews, Muslims and Christians opens.

1941: The USO is formed by the YMCA and five other national service organizations.

1958: YMCA World Service launches "Building for Brotherhood" campaign.

1961: President John F. Kennedy founds the Peace Corps patterned after YMCA.

1967: YMCA creates and trademarks its signature logo.

1971: Dr. Leo B. Marsh starts the Black Achievers program at the Harlem branch YMCA in New York.

1976: YMCA launches nationwide cardiovascular program.

1980: YMCA celebrates 125th Anniversary of the World Alliance of YMCAs.

1982: YMCA first childcare manual is published.

1999: YMCA membership reaches 17.5 Million.

2000: YMCA of USA co-sponsors first White House Conference for Teens.[15]


## Conclusion

The project is "Spiritual Formation in African American Youth." Upon completing this assignment, the resolve is stronger than ever to teach leaders to focus on spiritual formation in our youth. There are so many reasons why the church seems to have lost its focus on spiritual development in young people, and not all is to the chagrin of the church. While it is true, the church could do more in this area. For instance, historically, the Baptist church has always been deeply steeped in Christian Education, with youth as a major focus. Even up to the mid-90's the Baptist Training Union (BTU), was an expansion of the general Church experience, packed full of young people on

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[15] William Sweet and William Warren, "History of the YMCA in North America," *Church History* 22, no. 1: 65–67, accessed June 8, 2018, https://search-ebscohost-com.utsdayton.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000407953&site=ehost-live.

Sunday Evenings.   Some of the training involved adult faith leaders mentoring teens to teach in this Union. It appears that the older generation of black Baptists had a sense of obligation to minister to the inner person of young people. It was important and exciting to them, but as many were called to the Lord, their replacements did not have the same fervent desire in this mission, and the BTUs ended, with the exception of some in the southern states.  Identifying the right kind of people to work with this very essential program is as important as the project itself.  Where the church may have failed, is in not doing proper evaluation of replacement leaders and teachers concerning the mission.

An example of the Cultural Change is Sports for youth is increasingly competitive with events being held during the Sunday worship hour.  In the North, so many youth (male and female) have the level of involvement in school that causes them to miss church to play their sport.  Parents support this, therefore, there is no challenging the school system concerning scheduling competitions during the Sunday worship hour.  This aids in the youth losing focus and desire to be in worship.

In addition, many youth (particularly teens) are drawn to ministries and churches that have a music ministry that appeals to their sensibilities, but not their spirit.  Churches have been intentional in obliging to keep the numbers up.  It has been increasingly hard for some youth to sit through a typical worship service and get anything out of it.

Other reasons could be referenced, including the fact that some adult faith leaders (pastors included) do not feel the need to nurture youth in a biblical confrontational manner.  Some even have an agenda that leaves youth completely out of the yearly planning calendar.  The author's concern is the effect of youth not having a strong spiritual foundation, may ultimately translate to community and culture problems as well.

The goal is to first obey the calling; which is to feed them with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15). The plan is to equip adult faith leaders to develop methods that make the Bible exciting to youth and enforce a teaching structure that can appeal to the inner person, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This takes prayer and fasting, planning, organization, structure, follow-up and consistency in training.

The research on the YMCA has also been very enlightening. The organization began over the concern about the lack of men being nurtured spiritually. Much has been done in that area over the years. However, as the organization grew, the original mission seems to have gotten lost along the way. As the history records, programs and activities have taken the place of systematic Bible Study and spiritual development. Both can certainly be accomplished; and both are needed. However, that is not the case in the twenty-first century YMCA. While there are still 2,400 YMCAs worldwide, there is a rash of YMCAs closing or have closed, due to financial issues or poor management. The YMCA is of tremendous benefit in assisting men and women in life skills, job preparation, fellowship, and drug programs. The original concern is the present concern, and the concern that will be addressed in my project. While, we can look to the statistics that show how the unjust disparities against African Americans affects the culture, it is also essential to explore the theological mind-set of the dominant culture concerning other human groups.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

In this author's perspective, the role of theology in the African American experience can be viewed as an "escape" from the reality of the ethnocentrism that affects the culture. Because there appears to be no consistent constitutional justice applied to the existing disparities, religion is often viewed as a recourse to deal with the frustrations rising from these unjust racial disparities. For this chapter, the author will be utilizing liberation theology as the theological theme, showing that God is on the side of the oppressed. The chapter will view racial and moral perspectives from scholars, James Cone, Renita J. Weems, Anthony C. Reddie, and others. The chapter is written on the premise that race and cultural disparities have roots grounded in the Bible, but God is a friend of the oppressed, and that true freedom is in one's relationship with Jesus.

In his book, *Race: A Theological Account*, J. Kameron Carter states:

My fundamental contention is that modernity's racial imagination has its genesis in the theological problem of Christianity's quest to sever itself from its Jewish roots. This severance was carried out in two distinct but integrated steps: First, Jews were cast as a race group in contrast to Western Christians, who with the important assistance of the discourses of Christian theology and philosophy, were also subtly and simultaneously cast as a race group. The Jews were the mirror in which the European and eventually the Euro-American Occident could religiously and thus racially conceive itself through the difference of Orientalism. In this way, Western culture began to articulate itself as Christian culture (and vice versa), but now – and this is the new movement – through the medium of racial imagination. Second, having racialized Jews as a people of the Orient and thus Judaism as a "religion" of the East, Jews were then deemed inferior to Christians of the Occident or the West. Hence, the racial imagination (the first step) proved

as well to be a racist imagination of white supremacy (the second step). Within the gulf enacted between Christianity and the Jews, the racial, which proves to be a "racist" imagination was forged.[1]

Carter's position, while intriguing, does not address the Jewish people's perspective on their own identity. Does this group really define who they are according to the "culture's" standards, or do they embrace their heritage as defined in the Bible? Historically, African Americans have been defined and re-defined by the culture, i.e., Colored, Negro, Black, African American. For decades black groups have resisted the culture's labeling of black people in an effort to solve the identity issue within blacks themselves.

One group, The Nation of Islam (NOI) was formed as a response to the racism against people of color by the white majority in America. This group was founded first, based on the issue of race, more than religion. The NOI is viewed as heretical by the historic Muslim faith, which rejects the promotion of hatred. In his interview with Alex Haley, Malcom X adequately portrayed his eye-opening experience while on a pilgrimage to Mecca, where he saw Muslims of all colors and ethnic groups. He recognized Islam as a faith community who worshipped their god, Allah.[2] Upon returning to America, Malcolm openly refuted Elijah Muhammad's promotion of hatred of white people as an Islamic perspective.

The NOI contrary to the authentic Muslim faith, has been very critical of Christianity, which has love and unity as its core values. The NOI's position is that

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[1] J. Kameron Carter, *RACE: A Theological Account* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

[2] Alex Haley and Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley* (New York, NY: Random House, 1999), 325-371.

Christianity is a white man's religion, worshipping the white man's God. The organization targets black men on the street, unemployed, and un-churched. To an African American man whose experience has been joblessness, and possibly prison, being approached by a well-dressed black man with clothes in his hand and a message of hope, can be very appealing. Men whose identities seem to have been erased by their own choices as well as the culture are ripe for such an approach. While the NOI promotes pride and economic stability without the aid of white America, its un-biblical promotion of "reverse racism" (the author's term), prevents the opportunity to experience the God of the Bible and God's love and support of the oppressed. The chapter will show how some facets of Christianity uses scripture to justify present day racial and cultural discriminatory practices

Although in 1807, a Parliamentary Act was passed to abolish British slave trade, slavery itself continued in the British colonies until 1833. England first entered slave trading during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Anywhere between nine to fifteen million Africans were captured, enslaved and shipped to the Americas. Transatlantic slavery is known as The African Holocaust.[3] "British Christians were heavily involved in the slave trade. Records at Lambeth Palace attest to the fact that profits generated from the plantations came back to England and directly financed Churches here. A question that was asked is, what happened to the Bible and Christianity without the support of which slavery could not have thrived for such a long time in the Christian world?"[4]

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[3] Richard S. Eddie, *The Struggle to Abolish Slavery in the British Colonies* (Oxford, UK: Lion Hudson, 2007), 27.

[4] Anthony G. Reddie, *Black Theology, Slavery and Contemporary Christianity* (Bodmin, UK: MPG Books, 2010), 54.

> Unfortunately, American white theology has not been involved in the struggle for Black liberation. It has been basically a theology of the white oppressor, giving religious sanction to the genocide of the Amerindians and enslavement of Africans. From the very beginning to this present day, American white theological thought has been "patriotic," either by defining the theological task independently of black suffering (the liberal northern approach) or by defining Christianity as compatible with white racism (the conservative approach). In both cases theology becomes a servant of the state, and that can only mean death to the blacks. It is little wonder why an increasing number of black religionists are finding it difficult to be black and to be identified with traditional theological thought forms.[5]

The Bible highlights many examples of hatred and insensitivity against people who were non-white. This is not to say that other groups were not viewed as inferior. Cultural inferiority (gender, class, etc.) has a running thread all through the Bible. One of the stories more closely related to much of the African American experience, is the story of Jephthah in Judges 11:2-31. Jephthah was the son of a harlot.

When Jephthah's father, Gilead, married, his wife bore him sons. This could well have illuminated Jephthah's shame of being born out of wedlock and to a harlot. When Jephthah's stepbrothers became grown, they dismissed Jephthah from the household, declaring that he would not inherit in their father's house. They reminded Jephthah that he was the son of a "strange woman." Jephthah was strong, and a good fighter. Upon being ousted, he formed a gang and became the leader of them. He possessed the qualities that made for successful warfare. It was these recognized abilities that caused the elders of Gilead to engage him as leader in their fight against the children of Ammon. Many children (the author included) have been viewed as inferior because of their birth experience. This dynamic is not just race driven it is a form of classism. Jephthah was so desperate to claim an identity among the establishment of his day, that he made a vow to

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[5] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 4-5.

God, which resulted in the sacrifice of his only daughter.  It was to God he turned in order to change his status of inferiority among his community.  The key is, his community's perspective of his identity was vital to Jephthah.  Liberation theology is faith, being the element that confronts the injustice of the oppressed.  When a people have a clear understanding of their value in Christ, there is no need to bargain with God as Jephthah did.

In his book, *Identity Youth and Crises* Erik Erikson states the idea of "pseudo species" is connected with group identity formation."[6]  Erikson's position is that humans form their identities in relation to other human groups.  In so doing, the humans categorize ways to reinforce their cultural and social identities.  According to Erikson, humans reassure their cultural and social identities by defining them in terms of positive qualities.  Often in the African American community, the so-called positive qualities are limited to sports and entertainment.  For Jephthah, it was his valor, his ability to fight.  In the author's perspective, this speaks to the oppression of the predominant white race in America.  African Americans are fully aware that the black race is viewed as inferior by the predominantly white race, who view their race (color) as superior to all others.  Thus, the necessity to encourage African American youth to embrace their cultural identity as unique (not superior) apart from any other group, and enforce the knowledge that God cares for the oppressed, and that "if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (Jn 8:36, KJV).

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[6] Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism* (New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1995), 12; Erik Erikson, "Erik Erikson on Identity, Generativity, and Pseudospeciation: A Biographer's Perspective" *Psychoan*alysis *and History* 3, no. 2 (February 2008): 179-192, accessed October 11, 2011, http://doi.org/10.3366/pah.2001.3.2.179.

By sheer necessity, African Americans have been forced to deal with their identity in relation to other groups. Many educated and intelligent African Americans hold the view that Jesus was black. This could be because there really are dark-skinned Jewish people. It is exciting to think that a culture that is so displaced and dishonored in the United States can make the claim (even without full knowledge or proof) that the despised Savior looks like them. In Revelation 1:14-15a, John gives the following description of Jesus in his vision, "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; And His feet like unto brass, as if they burned in a furnace." This is a supposition on the author's part: Suppose God as the Omniscient One, knowing that human groups would have the tendency to lay claim to the Savior as their own, gives a description that covers all peoples? The white color like lamb's wool (predominant texture of black people's hair), white as snow (depicting the white race), feet like unto fine brass as if burned in a furnace (Asian, middle Eastern people). The fact that people, white and black have the need to portray Jesus according to their respective skin color, speaks to the consciousness of identity among the races, and that it is important to know God is on their side. If this is true, the author's perspective is the oppressor can easily use scripture to justify oppression of non-white persons, focusing only on the hair being white as snow in John's vision, and dismissing the other parts of the description (texture of hair, feet like bronze).

In his essay on "The Black Messiah," Albert B. Cleage, Jr., asserts that while white Americans continue to insist upon a white Christ in the face of all historical evidence to the contrary, until black Christians are ready to challenge this lie, they have not freed themselves from the spiritual bondage to the white man, nor established in their

own minds their rights to first class citizenship in Christ's kingdom on earth.[7]

Christianity teaches the freedom that Jesus died for people, especially oppressed people.

Before the era of "black consciousness" the artist portrayals of Jesus as a white, blue eyed man hung over the mantels and on the walls of many African American homes. Angels were portrayed as pink, chubby cheeked child-like beings with snow white wings. Even so, African American Christians knew the God of their salvation, and applied no physical characteristics to God. Little African American girls looked with anticipation for the box under the Christmas tree that contained the white baby doll. The images of heroes such as Superman and Batman were the delight of little black boys. The problem was there was no way to identify with these colorless images because the mirror showed the true image, the one that is unique and valued, yet not appreciated as such. The consistent imagery of "all things white" could easily make the culture accept this as the norm.

There has been some debate whether the Apostle Paul was an arch-advocate of slavery or a liberator. "Since St. Paul's epistles have been used and misused to subjugate people, they have remained questionable not only to "the darker peoples of the earth' but to many other Christians in their struggle for liberation, justice and peace across the world. If the epistles are barriers to peace and justice, the best hermeneutical approach would be to reject them."[8]  Paul's intervention on behalf of the runaway slave, Philemon encouraging Philemon's master to receive him back with mercy, may have led some to

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[7] James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, eds., *Black Theology*, vol. 1 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 102.

[8] Reddie, *Black Theology, Slavery and Contemporary Christianity*, 48.

view Paul as a supporter of slavery.  However, Mukti Barton gives the opposite

perspective:

> I am delighted to find that rejecting St. Paul is not the only Black theological
> approach one can adopt.  Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797), a Nigerian born ex-slave
> living in Britain, could be seen as one of the first 'Black Liberationist
> Theologians' in the British context, who makes a serious attempt at claiming St.
> Paul as a liberator.  His writing has caused a paradigm shift in my mind
> concerning St. Paul's attitude to slavery.[9]

The thread of religion-centered ethnocentrism runs thick in the Old Testament.  Moses

married an Ethiopian woman and was severely judged for it by his siblings, Aaron and

Miriam (Num. 12:1).  In His wrath against Miriam, God made her a leper.  Leprosy turns

the skin pale, or white. As a probable white skinned woman, the hypopigmented macules

would have made her already white skin both whiter and pale at the same time.  The

author's perspective of this particular punishment is that God would have her be as white

as she desired. In this, God presents God's self as displeased with Miriam's judgment of

her sister-in-law's ethnicity. In this thread, we see God displeased with these superficial

judgments of people to one another, and again being mindful of the rejected person. In

this and other stories we do not see God on the side of the oppressor as opposed to the

oppressed.  In this thread, we also see the integration of the races and cultures.

Of course, biblical interpretation is not an exact science and not gender specific.

In her essay on "Womanist Reflections on Biblical Hermeneutics," Renita J. Weems

states the following:

> Chief among the criticisms of the historical-critical method by liberation scholars
> has been the fallacy and fraudulent nature of claims for an "objective" versus a
> "subjective" reading of Biblical texts.  To the extent that no interpreter is able to
> divest herself of her values and assumptions, then all interpretation of data and
> texts reflect to some degree the subjective predispositions of the interpreter.

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[9] Reddie, *Black Theology*, 49.

Thus, a historical -critical reconstruction of biblical events is itself interpreted history.[10]

In the forty-sixth chapter of Genesis, two sons were born to Jacob by his Egyptian wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiperah, a priest of Heliopolis. Since Ephraim and Manasseh were not of pure Jewish blood, Jacob's father Joseph, adopted them which entitled them to an inheritance in the promised land. God reveals God's self as the God who loves unconditionally, particularly the oppressed. The doctrine of adoption is played out in the plan of salvation, respective of the Gentiles in God's plan. Historically, the Gentiles (a non-Jewish person) was an oppressed and despised race. Jesus, the Liberator lays claim to this rejected group in John 10:16 (KJV), "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one- fold and one shepherd."

The author's perspective is, if St. Paul had been an advocate of slavery, it is clear his relationship with Jesus changed his perspective. The Apostle wrote to the church at Rome, these words, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. 10:12 KJV).

The biblical foundations chapter uses the Jewish group as an example of how faith in God can help a culturally oppressed people celebrate their identity. Unlike Jewish youth, African American youth do not have the [ historical] foundation of generational teaching concerning God's role in their lives. Jewish culture demands the reinforcement of God's word to the child by repetitive teaching from the parent.

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[10] James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology,* vol. 2 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 242.

This is not to say there is no foundational or generational teaching in the African American culture. There are some families who created a solid spiritual environment for their future generations to embrace. Dr. Samuel D. Proctor gives one of the more copious examples of this in his book *The Substance of Things Hoped For*.[11] Dr. Proctor relates the history of slavery in his family, and addresses the success his family accomplished, not because of slavery, but despite slavery. The Jewish culture, to this writer, is closely related due to the many attempts historically to annihilate the culture, i.e., the Book of Esther, the various captivities (Egyptian and Babylonian) and the Holocaust (1933-1945). These experiences seem to have caused the Jewish culture to embrace their identity even more. Thus, the same with the African American culture with this caveat: (1) It is the unjust disparities that form the basis for identity formation in many African Americans, not a pursued relationship with God, thus the need to reinforce the liberating love of Jesus Christ. The following quote from Benjamin E. Mays, may shed a clearer understanding by stating: "The Christian religion as it functions in America has been both the friend and the foe of the Negro. Despite the paradoxes and the feebleness with which it is practiced in the American Social Order, it is potentially, and at times actually, the most powerful weapon a minority group has to press its claim for equal opportunities for survival."[12]

Survival is the predominant issue for African American young men in twenty-first century America. Police killings of unarmed black males dominate the headlines. In January 2015, *The Washington Post* began tracking every shooting by a police officer in

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[11] Samuel D. Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996), 1-28.

[12] Mark L. Chapman, *Christianity On Trial* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 7.

the United States.  The following statistics are from the Washington Post National

Database:

> Out of 239 police killings to date, 31 have been African American unarmed
> males. More than 210,000 students (all races and cultures combined) have been
> exposed to gun violence since the Columbine massacre in 1999. White people
> make up 62% of the population in the U. S. African Americans comprise 24% of
> police killings, despite being only 13% of the population. There are nearly 160
> million more white people than blacks in the U. S. Blacks are 2.5 times more
> likely to be killed than whites. The Washington Post quote from 2016, "U. S.
> police officers have killed the exact same number of white suspects as unarmed
> black suspects: 50 each.  But because the white population is five times larger
> than the black population, that means unarmed black persons are five times as
> likely to be killed by police as unarmed white people.[13]

Since these issues face African Americans in general, it is imperative for youth to

understand their identity, unfortunately, even for survival.  The question must be asked,

"Where is the church in all of this?"  Faith is the key element that molds one's

relationship with God and by faith a person sees beyond oppression to the liberating

power of Jesus Christ.  Black scholar, James Cone states, "The God of the Bible is not a

philosophical principle, not an absolute idea as defined in Greek philosophy. The Biblical

God is the God of history whose truth is known in the liberation of slaves from

bondage."[14]

In Jesus's time, the majority of the people were common people.  The religious

authority paid them little to no attention.  Their spiritual needs were not met by those who

should have helped them to know God. The church must be diligent in helping people

know the liberating God of their salvation.  The Pharisees withheld the true knowledge of

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[13] "National Database on Police Shootings, 2016 and 2019," *Washington Post*, accessed January 6, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1177/00111287 16686343.

[14] James Cone, "God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer, Man Our Brother: A Theological Interpretation of the A.M.E. Church," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Centre* 4 (June 1995): 26.

God from the Jews.  In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, Jesus denounced the

Pharisees for their religious indifference to the "least of these."  Insensitivity to the

spiritual needs of the people has always been addressed by God.  God has been

intentional in chastising the religious authority when they neglected the spiritual needs of

the people.  In the twenty-second chapter of Ezekiel, God challenged the religious

authority on their indifference to God as well as their insensitivity to the people.  God

accused the priests of profaning the temple, and the prophets of devouring souls.  In this,

God presents God's self as unaccepting of religious authority's neglectful behavior

against God's people, thus denying the people the opportunity to know God, the

Liberator.

It is hard to reconcile how any Christian can debate over the equality of humans

when God through the Apostle Paul, states God's position in Romans 10:12 "For there is

no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all

who call upon Him.  For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

During the 2016 election of Barack Obama, the nation witnessed how identity can

be used as a weapon to prevent success.  In the fifth chapter of Mark, a young man

possessed with demons was delivered by the power of Jesus' word.  The community was

accustomed to seeing this young man disoriented, violent, out of control, and self-

destructive.  When Jesus delivered him, the community came out to see him, and found

him "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind, and they became afraid." (Mk 5: 17)

The culture focuses primarily on the African American person who is destructive,

violent, unemployed, drug and alcohol addicted, with no appearance of dignity or

presence of mind.  America was not prepared for a Barack Obama, a black man sitting,

and clothed in integrity, intelligent, educated and in his right mind and the culture became afraid. Scripture brings the message of hope. Hope through scripture will build a sense of dignity and self-esteem in the youth in my context. Their identity has been compromised, not just by the culture, but by neglect of reinforcing to them who they are in the eyes of the Creator who made them; the Creator who liberated them by His love.

The thread of cultural ethnocentrism has many faces in scripture. In the sixth chapter of the Book of Acts, an issue of cultural neglect arose as Greek speaking Jews registered a complaint that their widows were not receiving the same benefits as the Hebrew widows. The complaint resulted in the formal instituting of the diaconate which benefits many churches today. The apostles, the original followers of Christ, in the spirit of true Christian love, took the issue to heart and made no distinction in the care of the two cultures. We cannot explore the church's role in identity formation without speaking to Cultural Criticism. "Cultural Criticism is an intellectual activity that analyzes the structural and expressive ways that human groups satisfy basic human needs and subjective goods. It examines the ways that distorted communication at various levels undermines the satisfaction of these goods."[15]

Victor Anderson, author of *Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay On African American Religious and Cultural Criticism* states that Cultural Criticism is both culturally enlightening and emancipatory. The author agrees with this thought. It is not possible to understand one's identity without understanding the environment that helped shape that identity. Cultural Criticism is enlightening in that it forces one to deal with the reality of their environment. A person cannot address what the person will not

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[15] Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness*: *An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism* (New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Co., 1995), 21.

acknowledge.  Cultural Criticism can be emancipatory, particularly in light of scriptural teaching on the liberating power of God.

Culture is formally a system of human practices that form human societies. Economics, politics, moral issues, and religion are all areas of activity and interests which are interconnected.  In the author's view, activity and interest is connected, which is why the disparities that adversely affect African Americans cannot be ignored.  The challenge is to show the youth how to maintain emotional and spiritual balance, despite the unjust disparities they face.  The disparities will not disappear; therefore, the youth must be taught to exercise faith in God, knowing that God is able to make even the disparities work for their good.

The imprisoned, embattled Apostle Paul put it like this "I have learned in whatsoever state I'm in, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11, KJV).  Those words in no way indicate defeat, rather a confidence in the freedom that Christ alone can provide, despite the circumstances one may be in.  It is an inner peace that knows God is not only able, but willing.  There is an urgent need for a critical historical consciousness of the Christ-centered, anti-black white racism that the earliest black converts were taught.  The Jewish experience and the Black American experience have been compared as it appears that the two cultures have some similarities.  William David Hart is a contributor in George Yancey's book, *Christology and Whiteness*.  Hart lifts an excerpt from Howard Thurman's classic text, *Jesus*, *The Disinherited*.  Thurman established the following parallel between the life of Jesus and the experiences of Black Americans.  "As a Jew, Jesus was shaped by His ethnicity, as were Black Americans; furthermore, He was poor and a member of a despised minority group dominated by a great imperial power.  Jews

and Black Americans were disciplined and punished. This is the position of the

disinherited in every age."[16]

Thurman's statement is reflective of Jephthah's and other's stories in scripture.

The treads of ethnocentrism are a running theme (not the only one) in scripture, how do

we understand this in light of today's identity issues?  In referencing the fall of mankind

in the Genesis story, Adam and Eve, who were made in God's image and likeness

(Genesis 1:26) disobeyed God and marred that spiritual image.  It appears that some of

the dominant culture apply the spiritual image and likeness to a physical characteristic as

skin color is problematic to them. Jeremiah 13:23a, poses the rhetorical question "can the

Ethiopian change his skin?"  A contributor in the Cone and Wilmore book on *Black*

*Theology*, Cain Hope Felder, states the following:

> In the sixth century B.C., Jeremiah knew that it was totally unnecessary for any
> Ethiopian to attempt to do so. Doubtless, centuries later, Jesus' 'father', Joseph,
> knew that his skin color needed no change.  Joseph was probably a proud Galilean
> Afro-Asiatic whose last thought -indeed- the furthest thought from his mind-was
> attempting to change his color into that of a Roman or a Greek.  That kind of
> thinking seems peculiar to our own age of pseudoscientific theories of White
> supremacy and Negroid inferiority (a most "enlightened" by- product of that
> glorious modern phase of Western intellectual history known as the
> Enlightenment).[17]

Paul, in the first chapter of his letter to the Colossians was excited to learn that they had

embraced the doctrine of Christianity.  He did not leave it at a "congratulations, glad you

made it" experience. The apostle put together a well thought out supportive prayer for

their further growth in Colossians 1:9-11:

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[16] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 158.

[17] Cone and Wilmore, *Black Theology*, 193.

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

The church can no longer afford to teach the scriptures as curriculum only, rather the church must pray that the youth receive instruction with "wisdom and spiritual understanding." The Colossians scripture speaks to the apostle's desire for the church to grow in faith. In the author's view, faith promotes growth and growth promotes more faith. James Fowler, in his book *Stages of Faith*, speaks to this by distinguishing faith from religion and belief. Fowler puts this in perspective with the following statement:

> As we reflect on our lives of faith, using faith in the broad sense I have been discussing, we recognize that we are members of many different faith -relational triads. In each of the roles we play, in each significant relationship we have with others, in each institution of which we are a part, we are linked to others in shared trusts and loyalties to centers of value and power. In each of these contexts we serve common goals, we hold shared meanings, we remember shared stories, we celebrate and renew common hopes. Our identity and our faith must somehow bring these diverse roles, contexts, and meanings into integrated, workable unity.[18]

It is by the liberating power of God's Word that the components of life Fowler references, can come together in a cohesive manner providing African Americans the necessary resource to thrive in a multicultural community, celebrating their uniqueness. The youth, and all African Americans can embrace God's Word for what it is intended to

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[18] James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (Broadway, NY: HarperCollins, 1995), 18-19.

be, the liberating force that shapes their true identity, not an "escape route" to not face the issues of life.

**Conclusion**

As previously stated, the author's premise is that the role of theology in the African American experience, can be viewed as an escape from the oppression experienced in the United States from the dominant white culture. It is for this reason reinforcing Christ as the Liberator to the youth, is essential. Earlier in this chapter, Benjamin E. Mays is referenced. Dr. Mays contends that Christianity has been both a friend and a foe to black people, yet despite its negative use from the dominant culture, Christianity is still the most powerful weapon black people have for survival. It is the Word of God that will bring true liberation to the oppressed in the African American culture.

The church must help African American youth recognize this powerful weapon that exalts their true identity. Street gangs reach out to the youth, with the promise of brotherly support, but with that support comes a cost, which can range from their loss of freedom (prison) to their loss of life. It is clear from the scriptures that God cares about those who are ignored, disenfranchised, disillusioned, depressed and oppressed. Although there are many examples of ethnocentrism from the Old Testament to the New Testament, it is clear that God identifies with those whose identities are questionable by the culture in which they live. So compassionate is God concerning the culturally displaced, that the Book of Luke is primarily dedicated to this perceived dysfunctional group of human beings. Luke, himself, as a skilled writer, is also an example of God's

use of "non-traditional" people in very significant ways.  All of the writers of the Bible were Hebrew, with the exception of this Gentile physician.

Luke's gospel is often considered the most interesting, because it deals with real human dilemmas.  Luke was more interested in persons, especially those who were oppressed.  His story of the woman with the issue of blood in Luke 8:43-44, and Zacchaeus in Luke 19:2-8, are examples.  Both examples deal with despised people for different reasons.  Both were recipients of the liberating love and power of Jesus. African American youth can thrive in a multi-culture society despite the injustices and disparities.  As the church reinforces the knowledge of identity in Christ in them, the youth will learn to celebrate their true heritage.  They will know they are unique (not superior), valued and appreciated.  While, we can look to the statistics that show how the unjust disparities against African Americans affects the culture, it is also essential to explore the theological mind-set of the dominant culture concerning other human groups.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

### Introduction

This chapter will discuss theories on identity formation in African American and other cultures connected with the discipline of psychology and some sociology. Exploring the link between cultural identities from a psychological view will help to build an understanding for the correlation or lack thereof within the various cultures. It is important to understand the role culture plays in shaping a person's identity and their view of themselves in relation to other cultures with which they interact.

Cultural identity issues in a sociocultural context can play a vital role in identity development. The link between culture and identity needs to be explored from various cultural vantage points. How does the socialization of identity in African American youth differ from the socialization of identity in other cultures? Historical changes in the sociocultural context have affected the black culture's need to re-create identity as the changes occurred, i.e., the transition between the use of terms such as "Negro," "Colored," "Black," and "African American." Every culture embraces its own understanding of the world and society of which it is a part. A culture group that has historically been viewed as inferior, dehumanized, and disenfranchised legally, socially, economically, educationally, and politically by the dominant culture group, may tend to resist understanding other culture groups.

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Exploring the psychology of the dominant culture group's ethnocentrism can provide some enlightenment into the so-called "inferior" culture group's response to the disparities. Identities appear to be inherently exclusive, therefore, leaning toward separatism. This is evident as many cities have communities that are divided by culture, i.e., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania has a Jewish community, an African American community, an Italian community, as well as a Russian/German/Ukrainian community. Most cities have a section of town dedicated to the Chinese or Asian culture and are labeled as "China Town." With the exception of the Italian and Russian/German/Ukrainian communities, the others (of non-white skin) experience some degree of ethnocentricity by the dominant culture. The issue the Jewish community faces (at times) is more spiritual in nature.

This chapter will also present the discipline of psychology (and some sociology) as meaningful resources to identify how the dominant culture's world view occasionally affects economics, politics, education, law, and, religion on other cultural groups. The chapter will address the various culture group's responses to the disparities that will be discussed.

## Theoretical Foundations in Ministry Practice

The church has an ongoing concern about youth and young adults struggling with identity issues in general, which is why adult faith leaders must be trained to address the issues, using a biblical perspective. The issues that concern youth and young adults range from relationships, finance, future goals, family crises, sexual identity, and education, to name a few. These are normal life issues they experience. However, added to this are

identity problems created by a cultural standard that does not include African American

youth as a part of that standard which bases black youth's identity on skin color.

Self-esteem refers to how one evaluates self. The term "the looking glass self"

was created by American sociologist, Charles Horton Cooley, in 1902.[1] It is described as

our reflection of how we think we appear to others. Cooley takes into account three steps

when using "the looking glass self:" step one is how one imagines one looks to other

people; step two is how one imagines the judgments of others based on how one thinks

they view them; step three is how one thinks of how the person views them based on their

previous judgments.[2]

Considering Cooley's concept to be logical, it is easy to see how cultures can

assume their identity based on the dominant culture's view of them. This project is

designed to show African American youth the importance of valuing their identity as

black people based on the biblical fact of their identity, specifically, in Christ Jesus.

Identity formation based on positive self-esteem and healthy interaction with other

cultures will broaden the youth's world view of how other cultures create their identities,

and it will allow black youth to appreciate the differences. This, of course, is where

spiritual formation must partner with identity formation. It will only be through faith in

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[1] Charles Horton Cooley, "Social Process," accessed September 20, 2019, https://search-ebscohost-com.utsdayton.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLAiGFE180108000478&site=ehost-live.

[2] A. J. Bahm, "Creative Personality," *Creative Interchange* (1982): 328-337, accessed September 8, 2008, https://search-ebscohostcom.utsdayton.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001127284&site=ehost-live, from Charles H. Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York, NY: Scribner's, 1902), 183-184.

God that the youth can use these principles while continuing to experience disregard for the black culture's identity.

One of the ministry models relevant to the issues addressed in this project is a youth and young adult mentoring program. Identifying mentors who share the concerns common to youth in general and black youth, specifically, is important to the development of this project. One of the negatives in the context (a predominantly black church in a dominant white community), is the lack of black educators, law enforcement, and business owners for black youth to identify with. This mentoring program will help build self-esteem in the youth. There are a number of theories on minority self-esteem issues.

According to Porter and Washington, early research on African American self-esteem concluded that racial self-esteem of African Americans was invariably damaged. The authors further state that recent studies have been guided by three major social-psychological paradigms: the first, relative deprivation, is a theory proposed mainly by social psychologists. The theory is that rapid socioeconomic change led to rising expectations, resulting in blacks comparing their groups with whites. Ultimately, feeling relatively deprived of prestige and power, blacks became dissatisfied and racially militant, and developed a high racial self-esteem.[3] The second paradigm, alienation, proposes that feelings of powerlessness and isolation among lower-income black groups would lead to an attraction to black identity movements. The third paradigm proposes that the socialization into a changing subculture resulted in a rise in racial self-esteem. In each of these paradigms, a rise in self-esteem among African Americans is a direct result

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[3] J. R. Porter and R. E. Washington, "Minority and Self-Esteem," *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 139-161, accessed February 5, 2019, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2083384.

of the dominant culture creating experiences for the rise to occur.  While competing with the status quo has its place, the goal of this project is for black youth to compete with themselves; to use their own passion and vision as a barometer by which to succeed.

Another ministry model relevant to this project, and essential to the church, is a "Rites of Passage" program.  Dr. Sheila Johnson Hunt is Executive Pastor at First Baptist Church in Penn Hills, Pennsylvania.  Dr. Hunt's doctoral project, "Mentoring African-American Female Teens: Christian Rites of Passage at First Baptist Penn Hills: A New Look at Teen Mentoring," concerns the pressure on teen girls to engage in pre-marital sex, often leading to pregnancy and STDs.  Her program seeks to move female teens from childhood to being productive functioning adults.[4]  Dr. Hunt's research does not cite identity issues as a possible cause for teen girls seeming to seek affection and affirmation by any means necessary.  However, identity (not so much racial as self-esteem) is the unspoken undercurrent. The question is "How can the church effectively show the girls and the boys that a 'boys will be boys' mindset prevents them from maturing in a positive manner?"  To use this thinking is actually justification to engage in unhealthy relationships.

This project on identity formation is not gender specific, it is culturally themed. The project will equip adult faith leaders to prepare African American youth for rites of passage, by an awareness training that shows the benefit of preparing the youth for future endeavors.  The rites of passage program will be titled "This Generation," and will be designed to accommodate youth beginning with the age of twelve-years-old into their teen years, and ultimately, young adulthood. The rites of passage program will address

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[4] Sheila Hunt, interview with author, March 15, 2019.

identity formation in Christ and provide an ongoing growth experience for each age progression.

The ultimate goal is to provide an adult faith based culturally awareness training that empowers and equips adult faith leaders to facilitate African American youth toward positive self and self-awareness.  This will empower the youth to navigate through the ethnocentrism they will face in college, business, and community with a heightened awareness of their valued identity in Christ.

August Wilson was an acclaimed African American author and playwright from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As a student in one of the local high schools, his talent was not appreciated or recognized. Wilson wrote a paper that, in the minds of his teachers, had to have been plagiarized, and he was accused of having done such. Wilson dropped out of the school and went to Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh where he studied for close to two years. On the wall in the African American literature section of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh hangs a copy of the diploma issued to August Wilson by Carnegie Library. The document reads: "This honorary high school diploma was awarded to August Wilson in recognition of his exemplary self-education at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh."[5]

This project, "A Faith Based Culturally Awareness Program for Adult Faith Leaders That Facilitates African American Youth Toward  Self-Awareness and Empowerment" will use experiences such as August Wilson's to encourage the black youth to intentionally seek the giftedness and intelligence with which they have been endowed, and not allow any influence, outside of Christ, to define who they are.  This project is also designed to teach adult faith leaders to equip youth to know they are of

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[5] The story and quote of the diploma were given by permission to use from Leigh Ann Cox, historian and head librarian, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, April 26, 2019.

value to the church while they are there, and in the future. The church must be relevant

to young people. This means to consider their worldview that is being shaped due to

cultural and growth experiences. Some youth express their interest in the politics of

cultural issues. It is important to educate them and give them a voice, listen to them and

consider their points of view. This training for adult faith leaders will help the leaders to

explore ways to provide a forum for the youth who are interested in understanding the

political process, exposing them to young, black political figures who are making positive

and effective change in the community.

The Lott Carey Foreign Missions Convention has a very effective youth missions

initiative whereby black teens are sent to the mission field in the West Indies and African

countries. The initiative exposes teens to the cultures of people with the same skin color

as theirs who also suffer the economic, political, and community disparities American

black youth suffer. The Lott Carey's Youth Initiative is so effective because of its

structure. Teens enter the initiative at the age of thirteen, being recommended by their

church. Their first trip is to one of the Southern states where training begins on feeding

the homeless, packing food and clothing baskets, and evangelism. This training is

continued through age fourteen, once a year in June. At age fifteen, the teen is

transitioned into leadership training for the incoming first-timers. By age sixteen, the

youth are preparing to interact with African, Jamaican, and Haitian teens on the

respective mission fields. Being exposed to other youth of color, but in a different

culture, enlightens the American black youth to the difference in the way the foreign

youth of color respond to ethnocentrism in their culture.

The foreign youth show a level of maturity not shown in the African American teens. This is attributed to the foreign youth never having experienced anything but struggle. This project has written into its mission the Lott Carey Youth Initiative for teens in the church. Preparation for this ministry in practice is being done on the domestic front before embarking on the foreign field. The youth chosen to participate are comprised of students active in the church, particularly, Sunday School and Bible Study groups. These youth engage in working in local soup kitchens during the holidays, pass out blankets to the homeless on cold days, and assist senior citizens when available. However, there is a deliberate effort to draw inactive youth, even youth who are troubled, into the initial phase of development.

One of the most effective ministries in practice that is helping to shape this project is the Community Service Initiative. This occurs when local magistrates, not willing to push a child through the court system over missing school or a fight, will engage the church by sentencing the child to community service at the church. Rather than have the child do menial chores (janitorial, landscaping, etc.), the child is assigned to a youth group that is working on a project that brings unity to their age group. This is done under the capable guidance of an adult educator in the church. The way in which it helps the project is the youth who come through the magistrate to the church are not only African American, but white and Hispanic as well. This dynamic provides a wonderful opportunity for the cultures to bond.

*Theoretical Foundations from Other Disciplines*

Self-esteem is projected by self-image. What one believes about one's self can play a major role in how one responds to how other's view them. This project, "An Adult Faith Based Culturally Awareness Program That Facilitates African American Youth Toward Self-Awareness and Empowerment" has at its core the issue of self-image of an entire culture. When a culture has been socialized and accepts the view of others upon itself, the image is to a large degree distorted because it is a subjective image, not an objective one. "When a cultural worldview supports the construction of such a social reality without critical self-awareness and consciousness of its own character and biases, access to more complete knowledge of humankind is limited."[6] What further compounds the problem is that the dominant culture projecting these views is so fragmented, even dysfunctional, in its own orientation to life.

One of the main assumptions this project makes is that an adequate understanding of one's true identity cannot be concluded by humankind; but rather, by God, the author of life. When a person or culture attempts to accommodate what the dominant culture applies as "the" standard, it can only result in a form of "cultural schizophrenia." As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the systematic attempt to simply describe black people over the years ("Colored," "Negro," "Black," "African American") shows how the culture moved with the tide of the dominant culture's assessment of that culture.

The psychological and sociological portrayals of identity of the African American culture is of great benefit to understanding why unjust disparities continue.

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[6] Helen A. Neville, Brendesha M. Tynes, and Shawn O. Utsey, eds., *Handbook of African American Psychology* (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2009), 35-36.

Some of the theories have even been instrumental in socializing the identity of black

people in America. The views of some of the most respected persons in the humanities,

when accepted, have caused great damage to the true understanding of identity issues.

Since mainstream American psychology has been historically Eurocentric, it cannot be

separated from the social context from which it emerges: a context of blatant racism

characteristic of the times. As far back as 1797, Dr. Benjamin Rush, known as the Father

of American Psychiatry, is supposed to have said that the color of black people was

caused by a congenital disease akin to leprosy, and the only evidence of a cure was when

the skin turned white.[7]

The slavery experience in America promoted the idea that black people were less

than fully human. The inability (or refusal) to see black people as fully human permeates

the foundations of mainstream American, European, European-American, and white

psychology.

> The first president of the American Psychological Association, G. Stanley Hall,
> theorized that Africans, Indians, and Chinese were members of "adolescent races"
> and in the stage of "incomplete growth", and therefore it was Western
> psychology's role and responsibility to save these adolescent races from the
> liabilities of freedom. The alleged intellectual inferiority of Blacks has been a
> long- standing premise of American psychologists from the twentieth century.[8]

This project asserts that the reliance on a statistical norm as the model of human order

makes an incorrect and harmful assumption that a majority in a particular context or

culture can effectively determine what is considered natural for human beings. This

portrayal continues to support the position of this project that identity in humans can only

be defined by a positive self-image. Although studies in human behaviors have their

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[7] Neville, *Handbook of African American Psychology,* 38.

[8] Neville, *Handbook of African American Psychology*, 39.

place in trying to understand the human person, the studies are conducted by humans who bring their own cultures and biases to the experience. The author proposes that these biases in themselves add to the promulgation of ethnocentric views from the dominant culture.

According to Alexander Thomas and Samuel Sillen in their book on racism and psychiatry, racist preconceptions can distort the psychiatric treatment process at every stage by influencing the criteria for patient acceptance and availability of facilities. "Unequal opportunities for treatment are apparent in every type of practice-office, clinic, and hospital. All too many psychiatrists, whether deliberately or unwittingly, do not meet their professional obligation to treat Black patients."[9] In light of the aforementioned concerns, it is fair to discuss black psychology and its pros and cons. From the Eurocentric reference point, normality is established on a model of the middle-class, Caucasian male of European descent. Again, this is a majority perspective and promotes the idea that a person is normal if they approximate this model in appearance, values, and behavior. Can this model be a fair model for black psychologists to follow?

Reginald Jones, in the book *Black Psychology*, makes the following assertion:

The use of Eurocentric reference point by non-European (Caucasian) observers has resulted in many non-Caucasian observers having some advocates of their own inferiority. It is for this reason that many so-called "Black psychologists" have been identified with the same racist tradition which has characterized the majority of Western psychology and its finding.[10]

It is hard to fathom that the very disciplines (sociology and psychology) which are designed to help enhance the human experience, at times, add burden to the very issues

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[9] Alexander Thomas and Samuel Sillen, *Racism and Psychiatry* (New York, NY: Carol Publishing Group, 1993), 135.

[10] Reginald L. Jones, ed., *Black Psychology* (Berkeley, CA: Cobb and Henry, 1991), 102.

they are designed to help. The irony of the black norm is that it invariably validates itself in comparison to white psychologists.

*A Look at Black Ethnics*

In the early mid-twentieth century, Jewish, Irish, Italian, black, and several other populations were historically categorized as non-whites because they did not fit the Anglo-Saxon Protestant classification. Ethnic identification for European ethnics was decreased or erased as white ethnics became more assimilated into American society. European ethnics came with greater resources and did not rely as heavily on their ethnic identity or community. This is the same dynamic being lived out in my context with the Asian community. Even African and African-Caribbean communities enjoy a level of economic success and economic pride that African Americans, for different reasons, still cannot attain in America.

Further observation shows that in their hiring practices, white businesses will opt for a person of color with a foreign accent over an African American English-speaking person. This is another form of devaluing the African American. Christina Greer concludes that presently, the new classification for many groups is a "black versus non-black" classification in the twenty-first century:

> Therefore, black immigrant populations, new to the United States and the nuances of racial hierarchies and incorporation, at times find themselves working to stay out of the black classification. The former example, "white versus non-white" is an exclusion of a majority of people from a dominant group, and the latter example "black versus non-black," is an effort by diverse groups not to be included in what they perceive to be "last Place."[11]

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[11] Christina M. Greer, *Black Ethnics: Race, Immigration, and the Pursuit of the American Dream* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 12.

According to Greer, questions about black immigrant integration and interactions with native-born blacks are key to understanding the political orientations and behaviors of blacks in America. Greer's theoretical approach is to assist readers in better understanding black diversity in twenty-first century America as one of an elevated minority perspective:

> What is at stake is not just racial or ethnic divisions, or model minority/elevated minority statuses for Black, Latino, Asian American, or even White ethnics in the United States. What is at stake extends to a larger understanding and investment in the American Dream. This collective identity may be political in nature, racial, or coalesced around particular policies. The urgency in determining the root of possible impetuses for coalition building will determine the ultimate course of American political and cultural endurance.[12]

A new insight gained is how the immigration issue brings even clearer focus to the fact that other cultures can come into the United States and do better than the native American or the native black person. This disparity is an issue of the heart both spiritually and morally, the only recourse for an effective outcome for African American youth is embracing who they are and taking full advantage of their uniqueness. Taking into consideration the continued, systematic resistance from the dominant culture, it is more imperative to prepare the youth to navigate through the system with knowledge and integrity. Leadership is another discipline that informs the project thesis. Youth must be taught to express their hopes for a brighter future. Some are entrepreneurial but cannot put a name to the burning desire to excel in some unique way.

    This project, "An Awareness Training to Equip and Empower Adult Faith Leaders to Equip and Empower the African American Youth in their Formation Years,"

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[12] Greer, *Black Ethnics*, 13-14.

will assist them in their response to the issues they face and will face.  Voting and

relationship issues are important to them and sexual identity issues are forming.  It is

enough with the ethnocentrism they face every day in every area of their lives; as these

youth grow into a culture and society that seems to be increasingly unconcerned about the

future of the young, it will be on them to stay the course and be the change they want to

see.  This will take a "no judgment zone listening ear" environment.  That is what this

project will attempt to provide—training adult faith leaders to provide safe place for

youth to say, "I'm really not feeling this!" without being viewed as being non-compliant.

In spite of the issues they confront daily (tuition, employment, etc.), young adults

bring a wealth of giftedness to the church and community.  The challenge is in

convincing them that their giftedness is truly valued.  Some conversations with young

adults revealed their mistrust of the true motive for using them.  Some youth stated that

they believe the church simply wants to use them to enhance the view of the church for

competition with another church.  They stated that there is no problem with that, except

that their respective needs are not being understood, recognized as serious, or met.

Since millennials communicate primarily by way of technology, this project is a

good place for the project age group to be encouraged toward more open verbal

conversation and a minimal amount of communication by text, Facebook, Instagram, and

Messenger.

> Black Millennials still believe in the value of Christian Education, even when
> they are not in the sanctuary to receive it.  More than eighty percent of black
> Millennials who are members of local churches participate in Bible Study, Sunday
> School, and other teaching ministries at their church, as essential to their spiritual
> development.[13]

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[13] Joshua L. Mitchell, *Black Millennials and the Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2018), 22.

Thomas Shelby says that African American identity is complex and intensely contested. Shelby further states that this social identity has at least five interrelated dimensions. First is the racial dimension, which most people take to be related to the somatic or genetic characteristics and continental origins of human groups. Second is an ethnic dimension, which is based on the presumption of a shared culture and common biological descent. Third is the national dimension, which generally concludes the ascriptive criteria of the racial or ethnic origins. Fourth is the cultural dimension, the social conceptions of which are not necessarily tied to shared physical traits, descent relations, or geographical origins. Fifth is the political dimension to African American identity; this is generally taken to involve a commitment to certain political values.[14]

As the various disciplines apply their theories dividing the African American culture into titles, sub-titles, and dimensions, it begs the question "is that what I see in my context?" Experiencing the up-close-and-personal relationship with the people in this context, I realize that the only real value of the study is its value for a larger group experience. It does, however, help me to understand the decisions made politically, and often religiously, and how those who make the decisions come to their conclusions.

This project will provide the awareness training for the adult faith leaders to assess their current teaching methods toward empowering youth toward self-awareness. It is important to understand what one knows. The prevailing image of the African American culture is portrayed by the dominant group. The discipline of psychology puts into perspective the mindset behind what is known. The discipline of sociology has

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[14] Lionel K. McPherson and Tommie Shelby, "Blackness and Blood: Interpreting African American Identity," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 32, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 171-192, accessed February 5, 2019, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3557949.

shown the truth about the dominant culture, that the dominant culture does not fully understand itself, and therefore has no true frame of reference by which to define any other human group. The dominant culture simply has the power, but the project will teach the participants who has the authority.

One of the project goals will be to teach the adult faith leaders to equip the youth with the knowledge that no human group can mold another human group because God's design is perfect. The resources that best facilitate the author in determining the author's approach, and which will be used, are the writings on cultural interactions.

## Conclusion

The author has concluded that the ethnocentricity in America, while damaging and disappointing, brings with it a certain energy to present God as the God who "chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty" (1 Cor. 1:27). African American youth hold the key to a more encouraging future for the black experience in the United States.

The theoretical study is foundational to the anticipated doctoral project in several ways. First, it confirmed the relevancy of the project; it is impossible to deal with the subject matter on this important issue of identity formation for our youth and not come away with a mind of "help them now!" Second, it challenged the author on the author's own biases, which were either ignored or not recognized as biases. Third, it made the author righteously angry and personally embarrassed to have neglected to take this on as a pastor before this project. Fourth, although very taxing, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, the study was well worth the effort. Fifth, the author has come away from the

study with very valuable ministry tools that will enhance the adult faith leaders and the church as a whole, not just the project. The foundation has been made more secure and balanced through this study; the direction is also clearer.

The project is constructed as a result of the research expressed in the foundation chapters. The information secured, only affirmed the dire need to equip and empower adult faith leaders to focus on self-awareness when spiritually nurturing African American Youth.

## CHAPTER SIX

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Introduction

In all of God's created order, humans and animals are equipped with an instinct to protect and nurture their offspring. The general principles are the same in both groups: feed the off-spring, and prepare them for life, immediately. Children must be physically, emotionally, and spiritually nurtured to navigate through life. They must also be educated in the social norms, and human behaviors of themselves and others. Studies show that early childhood learning is most beneficial and nurturing a child in the first five years of a child's life are the most important. These are the years that shape the child's growth, development, and learning achievement in school, home, and community. Children learn more quickly early than at any other time in their lives, and the first five years are particularly important to the development of the child's brain.

The ministry focus sheds light on the context and the problems that need to be addressed. There is a systematic and deliberate isolation of the African American community in North Versailles, Pennsylvania that has contributed to the insecurities and self-esteem issues that have prevailed. The problem is hiding in plain view, as one has only to take a specific exit to enter this separated community.

Although the African American residents managed to carve out an amazing lifestyle of home ownership, educating their children, and community support of one

another, the community of Crestas Terrace, has not enjoyed the same benefits from

Allegheny County, as the other communities in North Versailles. An important benefit

such as public transportation has not been accessible to the area, and racism has been in

the headlines. The Mount Carmel Baptist Church has served as the worship center,

meeting place, social hall, and political arena from its inception. Therefore, the need to

address self-esteem in this context from the biblical perspective is essential.

Teaching faith as a foundation for life is not an easy task, but certainly a most

important one. The biblical foundations explored Deuteronomy 6:4-7 as a clear mandate

from God to the Jews to teach their children to love, serve, honor and obey God. It

would almost sound purely academic if it were not for the intrinsic benefits associated

with the biblical truths. The writer, in verses six through seven, instructs the parents to

hold the words commanded to them, in their own hearts first, then teach them diligently

to their children; while they commune at home, or take walks, and when they lie down,

and when they rise up.

My specific concern is with spiritual formation of African American youth;

young males in particular. Jawanza Kunjufu asks this question: "Is there a relationship

between special education and prison? Between illiteracy and incarceration? Between

Ritalin and Crack Cocaine?"[1] More than sixty percent of black males are in prison

because of crack cocaine (distribution of the drug, or crimes committed to accommodate

the addiction). I ask, "Can all of these relationships be prevented by systematic,

nurturing in the youth's formation years, that is specific to self-awareness in Christ.?"

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[1] Jawanza Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries* (Chicago, IL: African American Images, 2006), 41.

When I began this task, I was not sure if it had any relevancy to it. Not having any prior dialogue with other faith leaders where this particular issue was the topic of discussion, I needed to know if this was an unspoken concern in the hearts and minds of other pastors. The process had to begin with interviews with pastors and adult faith leaders. I needed to know if they were aware of the self-esteem problems African Americans face as a result of not having a balanced relationship with Christ. Mostly, I wanted to know, did they find it important enough to address on any level.

My project is geared toward prevention, rather than cures. The hypothesis is, that adult faith leaders, equipped to address self-awareness and self-esteem issues in their biblical teachings with the young, can facilitate the youth toward knowing their value in Christ, in their formative years. Through a workshop setting, using specified presentations, along with prepared tasks, the leaders will know how to apply self-awareness principles to the scriptures. Presenters, five in all, were able to address spiritual, educational, historical, psychological and practical application components.

Although my project is specific to African American youth, it was beneficial to use the Y.M.C.A., as an historical reference to the concern for the spiritual well-being of men in general. While specific spiritual development of youth at that time, had not been the private concern of the church, the church's interest in their development was grounded in a Christian lens, a lens not shared by secular non-profit organizations. The YMCA has been a valuable and notable exception in its spiritual mission and objectives.

In Chapter Four, I look closely at the theological implications of the problem in the project. The theology, as taught, has not addressed the problem of identity crises in African Americans. The crises of identity are produced by the culture in which we live,

as African Americans face historic and continued unjust disparities.  The reality of the dominant culture's perspective of the black community as "less than" has produced a crises in identity among African Americans.  The chapter is written on the premise that racial and cultural disparities have roots grounded in the Bible, but God is a friend to the oppressed, and true freedom is in one's relationship with Jesus Christ.

Using such scholars as James Cone, Renita J. Weems, Anthony C. Reddie, and others, the chapter reviews the moral and racial perspectives of the scholars.  The chapter also presents the Nation of Islam (NOI) as an example of the quest for African Americans to create an identity unique to themselves only.  Blacks historically, have always desired and strove for their own place in a society that does not value them because of their color. Unfortunately, the admirable qualities of the NOI have been lost in their overall theme of perceived hatred against white people.

The interdisciplinary foundation explores some of the different theories on identity crises in African American culture and other cultures as connected with the discipline of psychology and some sociology.  Since cultural identity issues in a sociocultural context can play a vital role in identity development, the link between culture and identity needed to be explored from different vantage points.  How does the socialization of identity in African American youth differ from the socialization of identity in other cultures?  Again, I refer to the identity socialization in the Jewish culture, a God based identity.

This chapter also presents the disciplines of psychology and sociology as resources to see how the dominant culture's world view affects everything from economics to religion on other cultural groups.  A theory that is explored is Porter and

Washington's theory on racial self-esteem.  The authors conclude that rapid socioeconomic change led to rising expectations, resulting in blacks comparing their groups with whites.  Feeling deprived of prestige and power, blacks became dissatisfied and racially militant, developing a high racial self-esteem.[2]

The initial contact with participants was done via a personal phone contact from me to three pastors in my context.  After explaining the project and the problem that I felt existed, I was able to secure their agreements to participate.  Each one of them also agreed to solicit two to three adult faith leaders in their contexts to participate.  There were many conversations with my professional associates, one of whom, Dr. Sheila Johnson Hunt facilitated the program, which was held on February 15, 2020, from 8:00 a.m. until 4:45 p.m.  Flyers were sent by invitation only to adult faith leaders ages nineteen to twenty-five, to attend the program.

The first part of the day consisted of prayer, free hot buffet breakfast, introduction of the five presenters, and their presentations.  The pre-test surveys were given before the presentations.  A free lunch was served to forty-five participants, who had been given group break-out instructions prior to lunch.  Following lunch, three break-out groups of fifteen people each, discussed the morning presentations for forty-five minutes, then re-convened in the lecture hall to report out. Post-test survey questions were given, and the session closed with prayer. Advocating for African American youth in the schools and the courts, is my motivating factor for this project.

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[2] J. R. Porter and R. E. Washington, "Minority and Self-Esteem," *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 139-161, accessed February 5, 2019, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2083384.

**Methodology**

The ministry project could not be approached from assumptions about self-esteem issues among African Americans, and the probable causes. The research provided the historical facts, as well as some of the causes and effects on the African American psyche due to the American racial dynamics. The research, particularly in the theoretical chapter, provided historical proof that the ethnocentricity in America exists, and has a profound negative effect on the African American culture.

Once the research for the foundation chapters were concluded, I was able to cohesively, pull together the project. In communicating the project to the participants, my emphasis was primarily on the effectiveness of the Jewish people's ability to affirm identity in their children with God as their foundation. This was essential in light of the reality of the ethnocentrism that exists, and with the research to support it, that African Americans struggle with self-esteem issues due to the unjust disparities and the dominant culture's relationship with them. Identity in Christ is vital for African American youth in order to thrive.

The initial contact with participants, was done via a personal phone contact from me to three pastors in the geographical area of my context. After explaining the project and the problem that I felt existed, I was able to secure their agreements to participate. Each of them also agreed to solicit two to three adult faith leaders in their contexts to participate. There were many conversations with my professional associates, Dr. Charles E. Mock, Dr. Richard W. Wingfield, and one of whom, Dr. Sheila Johnson Hunt facilitated the program, which was held on February 15, 2020, from 8:00 a.m. until 4:45 p.m. (Appendix A). Appendix B provides the project calendar.

Flyers were sent by invitation only to adult faith leaders ages nineteen to thirty-five, to attend the program. The pre-test questions were included in the participant's folder. The post-test questions, and evaluation form were handed out at the conclusion of the day.

The research provided information from both the black theological perspectives and black theorists' findings, as well as the historical mind-set of the dominant culture concerning people of color. Robert P. Jones is the CEO and founder of the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), and a leading scholar and commentator on religion and politics.

In his book, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*, Jones describes growing up in a Christian denomination that believed that slavery could flourish alongside the gospel of Jesus Christ.[3] The research also affirmed the necessity of a healthy spirituality component with biblical proof that self-esteem in African American youth must be introduced and nurtured in them, scripturally, in their formative years.

Kawanza Kunjufu's statistics in his book, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries* gives his studies on "fatherlessness" in black homes, representing the percentages of lack fathers present during specific time periods:

- 1920 – 90 percent

- 1960 – 80 percent

- 2006 – 32 percent[4]

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[3] Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2020), 3-6.

[4] Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 41.

According to Kunjufu's findings:

- 63% of youth that commit suicide are from fatherless homes.

- 90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes.

- 85% of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders are from fatherless homes.

- 80% of rapists motivated by anger are from fatherless homes.

- 71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes.

- 75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse facilities come from fatherless homes.

- 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes

- 85% of all youth sitting in prisons grew up in fatherless homes.

- 82% of teenage girls who get pregnant come from fatherless homes.[5]

This information shows a compelling need for the church to do more in spiritually nurturing African American youth. One question is: "What happened to cause such a severe decline between 1960 and 2006? The author noted that in most discussions, there is always those who believe it is the residue of slavery in America.

The project needed to present an example of how being affirmed by community and having a strong self-awareness as a child, is essential. It was helpful to use as a prelude, the January 6, 2010 video interview by Christian Hip-Hop Artist Lecrae Moore, with CBN (Christian Broadcast Network). He was not raised with his father in the home, Lecrae spoke candidly about his journey of dysfunctional and dangerous experiences, that culminated in him finding God, as his Father.

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[5] Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 41.

I conducted two of Bible studies from the Old Testament, to assist teachers in applying self-esteem principles in their Bible instruction to youth. Using the story of Jephthah in Judges 11:1-40, I was able to show how being born in relative obscurity, and shunned by his community, Jephthah carved out a reputation for himself, that made the community need his skills. The story also shows how Jephthah's need to be affirmed as worthy, caused him to make a tragic decision. The following is the outline of the study on Jephthah's experience:

I.    Jephthah's Story – Judges 11:1-40

    1. A Community despised birth. Vs. 1-2

    2. Seeking Attachment with others- Vs. 3

        a. Jephthah became leader of a gang. Exhibited leadership skills.

    3. An opportunity to be accepted-Vs. 5-8

        a. Being needed by the people who rejected him.

        b. Jephthah is made head of the army.

    4. Jephthah exhibits negotiating skills. Vs. 12-28

        a. Rejected youth often possess overlooked talent and skill.

II.    The Tension in Jephthah's Story – Vs. 29-30

    1. Jephthah discovers his need for God.

        a. Learning that skill, talent, and acceptance is not enough.

III.    Missing the Nature of God – Vs. 30-40

    1. God does not require bartering.

    2. Abraham, the example of taking God at His word.

The story of Miriam, Moses's sister in Numbers 12:1-15, speaks to God's displeasure with Miriam's racism against Moses's black wife, Zipporah.  I then presented a questionnaire to the adult faith leaders on the biblical examples, to get their perspective and understanding of the examples.

*Questionnaire for Jephthah's Story*

1. Can you identify principles of dysfunction in Jephthah's story?

   Yes------No------

2. Do you feel adequate to teach youth self-esteem principles from this story?

   Yes……No……

3 List the issues that prompted Jephthah's regrettable vow.

**Implementation**

All communication to the participants and presenters was provided via email. One month before the project date, letters of instructions were sent to the presenters.  The letter contained the following information:

1. An expression of gratitude for agreeing to participate.

2. The assigned component to present, and their technology needs.

3. A suggested format to accommodate their thirty-minute presentation.

4. A timeline to send for editing and final approval from Dr. Hunt.

Volunteers had been previously solicited to attend the registration table, to assist with serving meals and attending to any needs of the presenters and participants.  Folders were prepared for the participants and the presenters one-week before the program date.

The folders for the participants provided: the agenda for the day; pen and notepad; the printed program.

The fellowship hall at MCBC served as the venue for the event.  The room was set up classroom style, the night before the program.  The registration table was attended by two volunteers who registered the participants and provided them with their folder as they entered the hall.  Numbers were posted on the folder, to designate the breakout groups.  Laptops and screens for PowerPoint, and flipcharts were set for the presenter's use.  Volunteers were assigned to distribute presenter's syllabi upon request.

Two long dining tables were placed, L-shape in the back, near the kitchen, and pre-dressed for the lunch.  The session opened promptly at 9:00 a.m. with a video prelude from Christian Hip Hop artist, Lecrae. I explained the purpose of the project and prayer was offered.

I had previously determined that Dr. Charles E. Mock's presentation would be essential in setting the tone for the rest of the project, as well as the other presentations. The title of Dr. Mock's presentation was Biblical Foundations for Countering Youth Escapism and Promoting High Self-Esteem: The Role of Adult Faith Leaders: Curricula. Dr. Mock provided valuable information related to the project. Specific information that was discussed is indicated below.

The presentation opened with information pertaining to the national context. The National Context consisted of youth identity grounded in sinful humanity's worldview of the cosmos, creatures, creation, and calling.  Dr. Mock then explained that the problems with humanity-centered worldviews create identity confusion based on philosophies, political power, and ethnic racial cultural constructs.

There are problematic youth development identity deficit disorders sourced in urban neighborhood divestment, toxic environments, family-youth survival strategies, low-esteem and attitudes and behavior. Also included is gentrification, violence and abuse.

According to Dr. Mock, "The Black Church must counter youth escapism from racism-centered oppression in a Caucasian dominated society through intentional adult discipleship for youth purposes." Dr. Mock then explained the theological and biblical solutions by indicating that there must be a biblical foundation for youth development re-grounding in God's worldview of the cosmos, creature, creation and calling. A new adult discipleship curricula with age-specific objectives must be developed using the word of God, spiritual discipleship in Judeo-Christian, biblical theology and identity stories.

The new curricula must focus on the Son of God, Jesus as the Savior from sin and liberator of bound black and brown bodies. The Holy Spirit must be taught as the transformative power that sets one free to serve a new Master, Jesus. Included for practical application must be black persons and practices of black history with profiles in courage. Black family history stories that speak to survival in hard times, as well as the idea of collective/communal identity (All, Us, We) is essential. Organizations such as the OIC and NAACP speak to community involvement with purpose.

Dr. Mock spoke of how individualized, philosophical thinking of "me, myself, and I" become an entitlement society, because now, everyone believes they are entitled to the "American Dream." Dr. Mock further indicated that looking at the Jewish roots of black history, and black liberation, it was not "me, myself, and I." It was an "all, us, and we" mentality, so that whatever an individual did within the Jewish family roots, was a

part of a larger family communal village. The American dream, expressed and understood by the dominant culture, has never been a reality for the African American

Dr. Mock was able to apply every component of his outline to the national context that adversely affects African American youth in the twenty-first century. The adult faith leader's understanding problems associated with humanity-centered worldviews is essential when addressing self-esteem issues. Identity confusion is based on philosophies, political power, ethnic and racial cultural constructs.

The other presenters were chosen because each of them pastor churches in the same area as my context and share similar problems unique to that particular area. All of our churches are a part of what is known as the Lower Mon Valley, yet, all are in Allegheny County. Dr. Wingfield's presentation, "Realities of Mon-Valley Youth Self-Esteem Issues" is important because of the community dynamic. Unity Baptist Church, where Dr. Wingfield serves as pastor, is located in what was once a very flourishing economically sound community, Braddock, Pennsylvania.

Those were the days when the Steel business provided vast job opportunities for the African American family. Many of the elderly that are still with us, live comfortably from the benefits provided by U.S. Steel, Homestead Works, and other mills. Unfortunately, the African American families led by parents sixty-years old and younger, did not reap the benefit of the steel industry. In 1970, foreign competition led to the collapse of the steel industry in Pittsburgh and surrounding areas. To get the timeline and demographics, as well as the issues that adversely affect African American youth, refer to Appendix C.

Dr. Wingfield spoke on Gen Z, which were born between 1995-2015, sixty-seven million Americans are a part of Generation Z. Dr. Wingfield's position was Gen Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation, with 48% identifying as non-White. Some of the characteristics are, they were raised with a digital connection to society, their lives tend to be overscheduled, and they are often viewed as anxious and distrustful.

The majority of youth from the Lower Mon attend Woodland Hills School District. The district is comprised of thirteen municipalities and is 72% African American. Fear and trauma are the cultural challenges these youth face for multiple reasons. The police shooting of an unarmed African American youth, incidents of two resource officers mishandling students, the policy on police and students has not been updated in over two decades, and the policy on gangs is the same. Dr. Wingfield showed statistics where 94% of the students were economically disadvantaged. Most disturbingly, the district is ranked within the bottom 50% of all 663 Pennsylvania School districts.

Rev. Earlene Coleman is the pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, another ministry in the Lower Mon-Valley area. Growing up in the area, and retiring from the McKeesport Area School District, Rev. Coleman is in the unique position of living through the "Environmental Trauma on Mon Valley Youth" and more astute than most concerning the issue. Rev. Coleman has been intentional about building ministry for African American youth that addresses the trauma they experience in school and the community. Her presentation dealt with the trauma from shootings that have claimed the lives of many in her district. McKeesport recorded a violent crime rate of

2,125 per 100,000 in 2017.  Rev. Amelia Jones, Pastor of New Jerusalem Holiness

Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has unique ministry of "Spiritual Methodologies."

The grandmother of a nineteen-year-old quadriplegic granddaughter who is also

unable to speak, Rev, Amelia has developed strategies over the years that assist disabled

youth, and builds self-esteem in them in various ways, meeting them at the points of their

capacity to receive. A key piece in Rev. Jones' experience. is teaching the agency

caregivers her process in assisting the disabled youth.

David Odom is the trustee chairman in my context, and an adult faith leader.  Mr.

Odom is the Chief Information Officer for Cyber Security, covering the government's

computers. David has been concerned about the information our youth have access to in

social media platforms and has held Cyber Boot Camps in the context.  One of his

concerns is cyber bullying.  David provided a suggested teaching guide for the adult faith

leaders to assist them in developing curriculum (Appendix D).

David explained the difference between earthly identity and heavenly identity

with scripture references. Since the majority of our youth do not possess a comprehensive

understanding of their identity, they struggle with society's view of who they are.  The

youth do not have a clear perspective on who they are in God's view, all while coping

with the impact of social media.

David emphasized that our African American Youth are inundated with images

and negative stereotypes of who they are, how they should act, and what they can

achieve.  Our youth must be taught that they are worth dying for, treasured, forgiven and

set free in Christ.  The solution to these negative applications is positive reinforcement on

every level in our spiritual nurturing of African American Youth.  Real world examples

such as August Wilson, previously referenced, are important in showing the youth that it is possible to thrive, even in this culture.

Participants were encouraged by the facilitator, Dr. Sheila Johnson Hunt to write questions as the person presented. There would be no question and answer session until after lunch, when the group gathered after the break-out sessions. The author observed the interactions during lunch. Some participants attempted to have dialogue with a presenter on their presentation but were encouraged to hold the question so the entire group could benefit from the discussion.

Group leaders had been selected prior to the break-out sessions and were given a description of the tasks to present to their group during their time together. The hall had sufficient space for the two groups to distance themselves for dialogue without much disturbance from the other group's voices. When the break-out time was concluded, a signal was given to pull the entire group together for the afternoon session. Each reporter spoke on their group's assigned task.

The assigned tasks brought out some of the adult faith leaders' concerns about the inability to create a program that spoke to self-esteem and self-awareness for the ages presented to them. Others found the task interesting and challenging and embraced the idea of searching the scriptures to apply the principles to the task. It was concluded in the open discussion, that the task was an important experience in the adult faith leader's future work with African American Youth.

The panel discussion was previously set. Dr. Sheila Hunt gave instructions to the presenters and the participants on time for questions, answers and expanded discussion.

Following the panel discussion, any questions that participants wrote during the morning presentation was open for discussion.

Each presenter was given a few minutes to give a concluding statement about the reality of self-awareness problems in African American youth, and the urgent need to re-focus the way we nurture them spiritually in their formation years. The facilitator presented a ten- minute statement that tied the whole project together, offering the presenters, the host and herself, to the participants for further dialogue after the closing prayer. Several participants stayed and continued in discussion with us, before leaving.

## Summary of Learning

I now mention an unusual addition to the project. A friend, a Caucasian woman, an Evangelical by faith, had asked to attend the project with three of her friends. She and I had engaged in many conversations over the eleven years of our friendship, and I felt comfortable that her motive was simply to gain a better insight on the issues people of color face in America. Not counting the special group of four, there were forty-five participants, exclusive of the five presenters, in attendance. Upon getting approval from the mentors, I gave her the conditions for my friend's group to attend. It was understood this was not a debate on race. They could attend as observers only and could not participate in the break-out groups or the panel discussions.

Since the adult faith leaders in my context have known my friend through me, there was no observable discomfort from anyone due to their attendance. In addition, there was no effort on any participant's part to not speak freely in any of the discussions.

The interest in the theme of the project was surprising in a good way. In my perspective, there are several dynamics that made the project so appealing to so many:

1. The times. The project is being done during a very tumultuous period, when America is deeply divided on every front.

2. Seems to be politically generated, the race issue is at the forefront. Although the majority of the turmoil

3. Threats of cuts to vital benefits, such as education and health is weighing heavily on the minds of the middle-class and poor, many of whom are African American.

4. The Black Lives Matter Movement has gained momentum, as police related killings of black unarmed men continue to occur.

5. School, church and synagogue shootings are covering the headlines.

The responses from the pre-test and post-test surveys showed how out of touch the church has been with the issue of self-esteem in African American youth. Forty-five folders with the pre-test survey in it was given. The breakdown of responses are as follows:

*Pre-Test*

Do you feel that you understand the challenges African American Youth face?

Yes------No-----/ forty-three out of forty-five responded no.

Do you feel adequately prepared to share Biblical Self-esteem principles with African American Youth?

Yes……No……/thirty-nine out of forty-five responded no

Do you understand the church's role in addressing self-esteem issues?
African American youth face?

Yes……No……/twenty-eight out of forty-five responded yes, nine said no, eight did not respond.

The results showed the lack of knowledge and or understanding of self-esteem awareness concerning youth, among adults.  In the book, *My Grandmothers Hands,* by Resmaa Menakem, the author indicates that culture is how our bodies retain and reenact history – through the foods we eat; the stories we tell; the things that hold meaning for us and the way we see the world.[6]  Culture creates a sense of belonging in our bodies and we experience it deeply.  When we belong, we feel that our life has value and meaning.  In our discussion, the adult faith leaders applied these principles to the Jephthah story.

Change culture, change lives, change lives change history.  The fact that most of the participants did not feel qualified to address the issue of self-esteem with the youth, supports my hypothesis. Equipping and empowering the leaders to be effective in this task, would require on-going training for them.

The task of the pastor is to teach the adult faith leaders how to identify issues in scripture, that bring self-awareness to the youth.  This will involve personal introspective from each person.  How Bible knowledgeable are they?  Do they have a structured devotional life?  Do they pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit in developing their lessons?  Are they excited about the story, generating excitement in the youth?

The late Dr. Isaac Green was the pastor of Central Baptist Church in Pittsburgh.  In teaching hermeneutics and homiletics, he would say, "Your preaching and teaching is only as good as your prayer life.  If you don't have consistent conversations with God, He won't have conversations with you about His directives."  The scriptures provide more

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[6] Resmaa Menakem*, My Grandmother's Hands* (Las Vegas, NV: Central Recovery Press, 2017), 26.

than enough fodder to develop relevant curriculum on self-esteem and self-awareness concerns. The Bible, as a human-interest book, is packed with human interest stories.

I have not studied one story that does not have somewhere in its theme, self-esteem and or self-awareness highlights. Part of equipping adult faith leaders is teaching them how to find the human interest in the story and make it both interesting and beneficial to the student. The participants expressed an eagerness to begin searching the Bible stories for the principles of self-esteem and self-awareness.

The adult faith leaders in my context, wanted more examples after the study on Jephthah, and I provided them with several examples. The story of Uriah, David's captain in 2 Samuel 11:1-5. I showed the leaders how Uriah, having integrity, and a positive opinion of himself, refused to allow the temptations of rest, food, and intimacy with his wife, Bathsheba, steer him from his mission. Another example was Paul's admonishment to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12 to, "Let no man despise your youth, but be an example to the believers…" I portrayed Paul as instilling confidence in young Timothy while instructing him to better than the people judging him.

Another way in which my hypothesis was supported was comments from two of the participants who expressed regret at not having this knowledge when they were growing youth. Another helpful resource recommended to the leaders is Klyne R. Snodgrass's book "*Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus.*"

Klyne expresses the following characteristics of the parables with a full explanation of each one. The headings of the parables were: "The Parables are first of all brief;" "The Parables are marked by simplicity and symmetry;" "Jesus' Parables focus

mostly on humans;" "The Parables are fictional descriptions taken from everyday life;"

and "The Parables are engaging."[7]

*Post-Test*

My hypothesis is confirmed in the Post-Test responses.

Has your understanding regarding the challenges faced by today's African American youth, increased?

Yes……No……/Out of thirty-nine, thirty-nine responded yes.

Do you feel better prepared as the result of today's session, to share Biblical Self-esteem principles with African American youth?

Yes……No……/Out of thirty-nine, thirty-seven responded yes.

Is your understanding of the role of the church in addressing self-esteem in African American youth clearer?

Yes……No……/Out of thirty-nine, thirty-nine responded yes.

The responses to the post-test survey confirmed that bringing awareness to the problems

of self-esteem in African American youth is beneficial to the adult faith leaders who

teach them. A problem must first be acknowledged before it can be solved. Both test

surveys and the responses acknowledge there is a problem in facilitating African

American youth toward self-esteem and self-awareness.

The problem must be addressed in nurturing African American youth in the

scriptures that makes self-esteem and self-awareness the focus. Again, I reiterate, the

unjust disparities, the racial injustice, the ethnocentric behavior from the dominant

culture is not a temporary or seasonal experience. It is historic, lethal and often terminal.

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[7] Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 22.

It cannot be ignored, as if it is going away with laws and policies. These things have their place, and can be beneficial, yet cannot cure the hatred in a human heart.

The evaluation form supports the success of the program. The form asked five questions, to be rated on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest (Appendix E). By the close of the day, nine people had left a little after lunch. Out of thirty-six forms submitted, thirty-two rated the event a ten, one rated the event an eight, and three rated the event a nine. Once the session closed, the special guests were free to interact with the participants and the presenters. They gravitated mostly to Dr. Mock, expressing how enlightened they were with his presentation.

## Conclusion

This has been one of the most exhilarating experiences of my ministry. My quest to build faith in African American youth is birthed out of my own life experience, void of any spiritual nurturing. In hindsight, I fully believe that my ability to navigate in a culture and a country that does not value me as a productive person, may have been less stressful with the nurturing being presented in this project. I am convinced that it is the yoke breaking power of the Holy scriptures that can address the inner turmoil that plagues the lives of people in general.

By reaching to the history and theories of the men and women who academically expressed their own concerns for the battle of the soul, I was able to affirm within myself, that the problem I see concerning self-esteem issues in African American youth, is real and serious. Through this process, I have learned that my burden for displaced and neglected African American youth, only mirrors my own unfortunate displacement when

I was young.  God has seen fit to allow me the privilege to see that there are answers to the problem.

This project more than met my expectations.  This project, I believe belongs to the mantra "For such a time as this" as we are living out, every day, the injustices that really affect African American youth having a positive image of themselves.  As of this writing, October 2020, the world is experiencing a pandemic. While Covid-19 has affected all races and cultures, it is the black community that has experienced a higher rate of deaths.

There are several reasons for this, among them is front-line workers such as garbage collectors, janitors, postal workers, hospital workers, all considered "essential workers," do not have the privilege of staying home during this pandemic. The disparity in testing the black community was the catalyst for to partner with a local health clinic to provide weekly free Covid-19 testing from my context parking area.

This is another disparity that contributes the emotional and psychological mind-set of African Americans.  My hypothesis is that when adult faith leaders are equipped and empowered to facilitate our youth toward self-awareness, the youth will thrive.  In my estimation, the project was a tremendous success, for these reasons:

1.  The subject matter was appealing to pastors and other faith leaders.

2.  We are living in a culture that appears to be swallowing up our youth, beyond our human ability to save them.  This project gave real solutions.

3.  The project challenged the adult faith leaders on the depth of their willingness to help solve the problem.

4. The participants expressed verbally, and by way of surveys, as well as in a written evaluation their concern that they had been ignorant to this problem, but, not willing to let it continue without a fight.

5. The majority of the participants have requested a quarterly training on developing curriculum from the scriptures, that address self-esteem issues.

The future work will begin with the children in their formation years because that is when learning is most receptive. Awareness training must be an on-going process, as leaders, like children, transition in and out. I have learned that we cannot assume people do not want to put in the time or effort; often, they are simply not aware that a problem exists.

In order for the future work to be successful, adult faith leaders must have the proper concern for the well-being of the children in their care. They must be willing to do the work of searching the scriptures for the biblical examples that are focused on self-awareness issues. Most of all, we must face the unfortunate truth, that we live in a society that does not value black lives, and it is up to us to prepare our children for the future.

In my perspective, these are the best times to bring a high degree of awareness to the Church on the issue of self-esteem and self-awareness in African American Youth. The Church has been intentional and consistent in her quest to train up the children. One of the problems is the tradition of all Baptist Churches using the same curricula issued out of our National Conventions. The missive is clear, "The denomination that knows together, grows together." The writers of the curricula are well-educated and anointed in their writing. The literature, having the same running theme, is age appropriate for children, youth, young adults, and seniors.

I dare not make light of the excellent work these men and women have provided over the decades. It has been valuable, and one of the benefits has been to share a common conversation in any city or state where a gathering is held, because everyone learned the same things on the same schedules. However, none of it addresses the practical experiences people, young and old are living out, today. I have already developed the template for adult faith leaders training, that will assist them in understanding a problem that they can be equipped to solve. The training will involve personal introspective workshops to give serious thought to their own self-esteem issues resulting from the ethnocentricity which may have affected them.

This must be done first, for the leaders to identify with the youth who now face what they did, but without the understanding of its effect on their lives. Curricula is being developed for the age groups in their formation years (early childhood zero to eight years), that bring to life human interest stories in the scriptures that can draw the child into the experience. One of the stories that I am passionate about is in 2 Kings 22:1, which speaks of Josiah being eight years old when he became a king.

To reiterate, the Jewish people are not mystical beings, they are human. Their children have been nurtured from birth to navigate through a world system that has despised them from their earliest existence. The Church is no less obligated, but more so, to facilitate African American youth toward the understanding of who they are, and to Whom they belong. They are the children of God, born to be victorious.

# APPENDIX A

# PRESENTER'S ASSIGNMENT CHART

PRESENTER'S ASSIGNMENT CHART

| Focus Area | Biblical | Practical Application (Action Steps) | Presenter |
|---|---|---|---|
| Theological Foundation for Youth Self –Esteem | | | Dr. Charles Mock |
| Cultural Realities of Mon Valley Youth and Spiritual Self Esteem Methodologies | | | Dr. Richard W. Wingfield |
| Environmental Trauma of Mon Valley Youth and Spiritual Self - Esteem | | | Rev. Earlene Coleman |
| Disability Challenges of Mon Valley Youth and Spiritual Self - Esteem | | | Rev. Amelia Jones |
| Identity, Earthly and Heavenly of Mon Valley Youth | | | Trustee David Odom |

**APPENDIX B**

**PROJECT TIMELINE AND CALENDAR**

PROJECT TIMELINE AND CALENDAR

| Category | Activity | Participation | Length of Time |
|---|---|---|---|
| **July 20, 2019** Received confirmations from Professional Associates | Sent Email to the Professional Associates | Acceptance to participate from three Professional Associates | Conference Call Thirty minutes |
| **July 30, 2019** Met with two Context Associates | Discussed Project theme and purpose | 100% Participation | |
| **September 25, 2019** Work on surveys and questionnaire | Developed forms to be used | | Two Hours |
| **October 17, 2019** Emailed letters of consent to three area context pastors | Asked them to solicit participation from their 2-3 adult faith leaders in their context | Received well, and names were sent. | Twenty-minutes |
| November 9, 2019 Bible Study with context adult faith leaders | Teaching on Jephthah from Judges 11:1-40 | Twelve adult faith leaders participated | Two Hours |

| Category | Activity | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **November 18, 2019** Conference calls with Professional and Context Associates separately | Discussed the five components, and each presenter's role. | Only one Context Associate could not make the meeting. | Professional Associates: 12:30 P.M.-1:30 P.M. Context Associates 5:00 P.M.-6:30 P.M. |
| **December 9, 2019** Met with Dr. Sheila Johnson about facilitating the program | Discussed the five components and length of time for each | Very good dialogue and brainstorming session | Two-hour meeting |
| **January 10, 2020** View and edit each presenter syllabi | Accepted or made recommendations to the presentation provided | Final recommendations received well by all. | |
| **February 3, 2020** Met with volunteers | Assignments secured for the registration table, assistance with lunch. | Five people volunteered to serve at the program | Approximately one hour |
| **February 15, 2020** Day of the Program | Workshop with 45 participants and 5 presenters | Very well received | 8;30=registration 9:00 A.M.-4:30 P.M. program |

**APPENDIX C**

**DR. RICHARD WINGFIELD PRESENTATION**

**DR. RICHARD WINGFIELD PRESENTATION**

**GEN Z: Cultural Realities of Youth in the Monongahela Valley**
Rev. Richard W. Wingfield, D. Min.
Unity Baptist Church, Braddock, Pennsylvania

Who is Gen Z?
- Born between 1995 – 2015
- 67 million Americans are a part of Gen Z.
- The most racially and ethnically diverse generation with 48% identifying as nonwhite
- Raised with a digital connection to society
- Lives tend to be overscheduled
- Described as anxious, distrustful and downright miserable

Cultural Challenges with the Woodland Hills School District

- Demographics
    - Consists of 13 municipalities
    - Minority enrollment is 72%
    - 94% of students are economically disadvantaged
    - Ranked within the bottom 50% of all 663 Pennsylvanian school districts
    - 25% proficient in math; 39% proficient in reading

- Cultural Challenges: Fear and Trauma
    - Shooting of Antwon Rose by E. Pittsburgh police officer
    - Incidents of 2 resource officers and a high school principle of handling students
    - Results of 2018 audit
        - Policy on gangs has not been updated since 1984
        - Policy on students and police has not been updated since 1983
        - Lacked policy for reporting and investigating bullying
        - Agreement with 6 law enforcement agencies and first responders was out of date
- Classroom
    - Technology class does not have enough seats
    - Science class does not have enough science kits for teachers
    - Remodeling is not complete – students continue to meet in trailers
    - School Violence
        - Experiencing of loss and grief
        - Anger
        - Hopelessness

- Unstable Home Environments
  - Broken home life
  - Unhealthy parenting models
  - Youth are parentified
  - Other Stressors
    - Food Insecurity
    - Peer Pressure and Suicide

Scriptural Solutions for dealing with these Cultural Realities
- Deuteronomy 31:6

- Galatians 6:9
  - How can we help young people to be strong and courageous when they're being harassed and helpless every day?

- Acts 20:7-12
  - Be proactive rather than reactive
  - When they fall, go to where they are
  - Embrace them in love, not judgment
  - Restore them to life

Practical Application
- Gen Z seeks authentic relationships amidst broken households
  - Many come from broken, unstable and dysfunctional homes
  - Living situations are household rather than traditional family units
  - Single parent households (often the mother), cohabitating relationships, and in some instances, same sex relationships

- Gen Z seeks mentors
  - Paul and Timothy
  - Orpah and Ruth
  - Isaiah 30:21

- Gen Z needs to see healthy relationships modeled.
  - Pre-premarital counseling
  - Experience what healthy marriages look like
  - Model of Integrity and character
    - **Character** is one's moral and ethical code, and **integrity** means that one lives according to that code.

- Gen Z craves environments where they can be free to ask the big questions
  - Be creative in teaching them with practical application

- Exposure

- Listen to their voice (hear their cries)

**APPENDIX D**

**DAVID ODOM PRESENTATION**

**DAVID ODOM PRESENTATION**

Identity: Earthly and Heavenly
David Odom

| Earthly Identity | Heavenly Identity |
|---|---|
| • Established by Man<br>• Subject to Change (True for a season)<br><br><br>• Access is based on privilege<br><br>• Judged by appearance and possession | • Established by God<br>• Cannot be taken away - (John 10:28) *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.*<br>• We have direct access to God – Our identity in Christ has given us direct access to our Heavenly Father, who we can call on with confidence and complete trust.<br>• We have no need to judge or compare ourselves to others. |

The majority of our youth do not possess a comprehensive understanding of their identity leading them to struggle with the following:
- Society's view of who they are (racially/culturally).
- God's view of who they are (spiritually).
- Coping with the impact of social media.
- The difference between their Earthly and Heavenly identities and which one really matters.
- The core of your identity is -- your heart. Your spiritual heart is described in Scripture as the innermost part of your being that guides and influences everything else in your life (Prov. 4:23).
- Your heart is the central headquarters where all of your true beliefs (Rom. 10:10), innermost thoughts (Heb. 4:12), deepest values (Matt. 6:21), greatest desires (Ps. 37:4), future plans (Prov. 16:3), and root decisions (2 Cor. 9:7) originate and reside.
- The core beliefs in our hearts leads to the ways we live out our lives, the daily deeds we do, and the resulting fruit of our impact on the world. (Jer. 17:10)
- Our African American youth are bombarded with images and negative stereotypes of who they are, how they should act, and what they are able to achieve.
- Solution: Positive reinforcement.
- In Christ you are: Treasured, Worth dying for, Forgiven, Set free, Set apart, loved beyond belief and Chosen by God to do great things.

Solution: Real World Examples from their peers. The condition of our heart is vitally important and God wants us to discover His truth, then speak and believe it in our hearts. (Ps. 15:2)

| Identity Truth Table | |
|---|---|
| **Identity Truth** | **Scripture Reference** |
| You Are Chosen, God's Special Possession | 1 Peter 2:9, Jeremiah 1:5, Ephesians 1:3-4 |
| You Are Treasured | Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 26:18 |
| You Are Irreplaceable | 1 Thessalonians 1:4 |
| You Are Worth Dying For | 1 John 3:16 |
| You Are Set Apart | John 15:16, 1 Peter 2:9 |
| You Are Forgiven | Ephesians 1:7, 1 John 1:9, Romans 8:1 |
| You Are Precious to God | Isaiah 43:4 |
| You Are Set Free | Romans 6:18, Galatians 5:1 |
| You Are God's Child | 1 John 3:1, Galatians 3:26 |
| You Are Secured for All Eternity | 2 Corinthians 1:22, John 10:28-29 |

Sources

1. Defined, Stephen and Alex Kendrick
2. My Grandmother's Hands, Resmaa Menakem
3. THE BEAT by Allen Parr - Social Media and Christianity
4. 412teens.org
5. Knowing My Identity from Youth Bible Study featuring Eric Mason - Bluefish TV

**APPENDIX E**

**DR. CHARLES E. MOCK PRESENTATION**

**Dr. Charles E. Mock Presentation**

Title: Biblical Foundations for Countering Youth Escapism and Promoting
High Self-Esteem: The Role of Adult Faith Leaders: Curricula

1. National Context

    A. Youth Identity Grounded in Sinful Humanity's Worldview of:
1. Cosmos:   No Beginning or Ending.
2. Creatures: Classism and Racism.
3. Creation:  Context for Self-fulfillment.
4. Calling:    Purpose-Dreams. I did it my way
     .
    B. The Problems with Humanity-centered Worldviews:
       1. Identity Confusion Based on:
          a. Philosophies
          b. Political Power
          c. Ethnic/Racial Cultural Constructs

11. Problematic Youth Development: Identity Deficit Disorders: Sourced in:

       1. Urban Neighborhood Divestment
       2. Toxic Environments
       3. Family-Youth Survival Strategies
       4. Low-esteem Attitudes and Behavior
       5. Gentrification
       6. Violence
       7. Abuse

The Black Church must counter Youth Escapism from racism-centered oppression in a Caucasian dominated society through intentional Adult Discipleship for Youth purposes:

    111. Theological/Biblical Solutions

    A. A Biblical Foundation for Youth Development: Re-grounding in
       God's Worldview of:
       1. Cosmos: "Declares the glory of God.
          Genesis 1:1-26; Psalm 8:1; 19:1

       2. Creatures: Re-Created: Sacred Image of God
          Genesis :27; Romans 12:2

       3. Creation: God's for God's Mission
          "Be fruitful and multiply, replenish, subdue, take dominion
          Genesis 1:27-28

4. Calling:   Life and Abundance
John 10:10

B. A New Adult Discipleship Curricula with Age-specific Objectives
Using:

1. Word of God: Spiritual Discipleship in Judeo-Christian
Biblical Theology: Identity Stories

2. Son of God: Jesus as Savior from Sin AND Liberator of bound
Traumatized Black and Brown bodies

3. Holy Spirit: Transformative Power that sets one free to serve
A new Master-Jesus

4. Best Persons-Practices of Black History: Profiles of Courage

5. Black Family History: How My Loved One's Made it Over

6. Collective /Communal Identity Formation: All/Us/We
a. NAACP
b. OIC
c. Urban League

**APPENDIX F**

**AGENDA**

Saturday February 15, 2020 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

AGENDA

Opening-9:00A.M.

Prelude………………………………………………………………………Le crae

Purpose of Project…………………………………………………… Rev. Barbara Gunn

Prayer……………………………………………………………………C heryl Hammer

Game/Video…………………………………………………………..Dr. Sheila Hunt

9:30 A.M.- 10:00 A.M.

Spiritual/Theological Foundation for Youth Self-Esteem

Presentation #1…………………………………………………………. Dr. Charles E. Mock

10:00 A.M.-10:30 A.M.
Realities of Mon-Valley Youth Self-Esteem Issues

Presentation # 2……………………………………………………… Dr. Richard W. Wingfield

10:30 A.M. – 11:00 A.M

Environmental Trauma on Mon-Valley Youth

Presentation # 3……………………………………………………… Rev. Earlene Coleman

11:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M
Spiritual Self-Esteem Methodologies

Presentation # 4……………………………………………………… Rev. Amelia Jones

<div align="center">

11:30 A.M.-12 Noon
Identity: Earthly and Heavenly of Mon Valley Youth

</div>

Presentation #5…………………………………………………………..Trustee David Odom

<div align="center">

Lunch 12:10 P.M.-12:40 P.M.

12:45 P.M.-1:30 P.M.

**Break-out Session (three groups of 15 people)**

</div>

**Instructions: Using the information from the morning presentations, please complete the assigned task according to the number on your folder.**

**TASK #1 (Folder numbers 1and 3)**

Plan a "Teen Summit" for 30 youth, ages 13-18. Name the self-esteem topics to be addressed: Self-talk, language, body image, date abuse, trauma.  Presentation Method: Technology needed, space configuration, supplies.

**TASK # 2 (Folder numbers 2 and 3-A)**

Plan a "God's Creation Children's Festival" for children 5-12 years of age.  Name self-esteem topics to be addressed, such as, "you are Special" (Beauty of African American children), Love Your Neighbor (service project: Get-well cards for the sick in the Church and Children's Hospital). Presentation Method: Technology needed, space configuration, supplies.

<div align="center">

1:45 P.M. – 2:30 P.M. – Break-out Discussions

3:00 P.M.-3:45 P.M**.**

</div>

**Panel Discussion with all presenters**

3:45 P.M.-4:15 P.M.


Summation of The Day's Activities- Dr. Sheila Hunt

4:30 P.M.

Closing Remarks and Prayer- Rev. Barbara Gunn

**APPENDIX G**

**EVALUATION FORM FOR AWARENESS TRAINING**

**EVALUATION FORM FOR AWARENESS TRAINING**


Mount Carmel Baptist Church
February 15, 2020



1. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest please rate the p1 to 10, with 10 being the presentations.

2. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, please rate the information provided.

3. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, please rate the subject of the project.

4. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, please rate the necessity of this program.

5. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, please rates the overall day.


Please feel free to leave any comments concerning this workshop:

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